

THE MEMOIRS OF
JACQUES CASANOVA
DE SEINGALT



COMPLETE IN TWO VOLUMES
TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH BY
ARTHUR MACHEN

INTRODUCTION BY ARTHUR SYMONS
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VOLUME ONE



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EDITOR'S NOTE

THE twelve-volume *Aventuros* edition of Casanova's MEMOIRS (New York, 1925), which the present editor assisted in preparing for publication, has been used, with due consent of the publishers, as a basis for the present edition. Where clarity or correct rendering required emendation of the English text, the eight-volume French edition (Paris, Garnier) has been employed. Also, for purposes of general publication, some excisions and paraphrasing have been found necessary, but these slight modifications have not altered the character or the essential content of this uniquely interesting and informative revelation of a life and a social period.

F. A. B.

INTRODUCTION

I

THERE is something tricky, audacious, shameless, violent, Venetian, fascinating—apart from the quaint inhibitions that are so commonly associated with him—in Casanova's genius, and his mental activity, up to the age of seventy-three, was as prodigious as the activity which he had expended in living a multiform and incalculable life; creating, as he did in Dux during the intervals of fourteen years, his *Memoirs*, in which he reveals his naked soul, in which truth is deftly blended with what is obviously imaginary in the interminable descriptions of his amours—the amours of an insatiable lover.

And yet these *Memoirs* are perhaps the most valuable document which we possess on the society of the eighteenth century; they are the history of a unique life, a unique personality, one of the greatest of autobiographies; as a record of adventures, they are more entertaining than *Gil Blas* or *Monte Cristo*, or any of the purely imaginary travels, and escapes, and masquerades in life, which have been done into books. They tell the story of a man who loved life passionately for its own sake; one to whom woman was, indeed, the most important thing in the world, but to whom nothing in the world was indifferent.

"The man's own portrait," writes Charles Whibley, "offers a partial explanation of the enterprise of the eighteenth century. The hungry eye, the hawk-like nose, the savagely determined chin, indicate the selfish necessity of acquisition and enjoyment. On the other hand, the high receding forehead bears witness at once to intellect and fatuity." In this extraordinary and emaciated face all the fury and rage and disquietude of the man's temperament seem to be in a kind of eternal conflict. Pride, unvanquished pride, glitters in the hawk's eyes; the cheeks are ravaged with ravines of wrinkles; that lust which means always to him as much as life itself pervades the entire huge face; there is, you might say, something of the ferocity of the wolf, and something of the cruel craft of the serpent. Surely his portraits as well as his writings prove that he was vividly alive, full of fiery energy and calm resource. He was a thinker and a fighter in one; a scholar, an adventurer, perhaps a Cabalist, a busy stirrer in politics, a gamester, one "born for the fairer sex," as he tells us, and born also to be a vagabond; this man, who is remembered now for his written account of his own life, was

that rarest kind of autobiographer, one who did not live to write, but wrote because he had lived, and when he could live no longer.

Our Casanova, impenitent courtier of all the hazards that exist, is the supreme protagonist of the unmoral will; his code of conduct, if he may be said to have had one, was written in the white-hot moment of action to suit the directions of his energy; and because these directions were many, there is no apparent consistency between the generous action and lofty imagination that are so often revealed in the *Memoirs*, and the rogueries of which he was not incapable. He is frank; he writes down in a most incongruous fashion his vices and his virtues, sparing himself not at all in his meanest moments; and if Casanova was, as he proclaimed himself, a philosopher, it may be said of him that he was not afraid to put his philosophy to the test of experience.

Never was there such an eager traveller! He mixed himself up in vast enterprises, he jostled with curious crowds in every important city of the continent; and as for following his wanderings, it is not only to lose oneself in a desert, but almost utterly to exhaust the map of Europe. His *Memoirs* give us sidelights, all the more valuable in being almost accidental, upon many of the affairs and people most interesting to us during two-thirds of the eighteenth century. Giacomo Casanova was born in Venice, of Spanish and Italian parentage, on April 2nd, 1725; he died at the Château of Dux, in Bohemia, on June 4th, 1798. In that lifetime of seventy-three years he travelled, as his *Memoirs* show us, in Italy, France, Germany, Austria, England, Switzerland, Belgium, Russia, Poland, Spain, Holland, Turkey; he met Voltaire at Ferney, Rousseau at Montmorency, Fontenelle, d'Alembert and Crébillon at Paris, George III in London, Louis XV at Fontainebleau, Catherine the Great at St. Petersburg, Benedict XII at Rome, Joseph II at Vienna, Frederick the Great at Sans-Souci.

Casanova—a mass of tangled nerves which he generally managed to control—has striven, at his finest, not only to excite our senses with his most intimate confessions, but to touch our nerves to the quick. His narrative is vivid and image-provoking; his dialogue is spirited and witty; his characters are worthy of a great dramatist. Hundreds of persons are sketched in by his swift pen to stand out distinct as individual and living beings. As Uzanne says, he relates to us more than a hundred adventures conducted to some delectable end because they are deliciously alive and because they have an infinite variety, and all this with the aid of "*une verve éroto-comique, parfois tragico-phallique.*" So our phallic Hermes pursues his adventures, which land him either in the island of Cythera or on that of Paphos.

II

The *Memoirs*, as we have them, break off abruptly at the moment when Casanova is expecting a safe conduct and the permission to return to Venice after twenty years' wanderings. In 1774, at the age of forty-nine, he wrote in the last volume: "I returned to Trieste, determined to do my best for the Tribunal, for I longed to return to Venice after

nineteen years' wanderings. I expected no more of Fortune's gifts, for the Deity despises those of ripe age. I thought, however, that I might live comfortably and independently at Venice. I had talents and experience, and I hoped to make use of them, and I thought the Inquisitors would feel bound to give me sufficient employment." This they did; he received permission from them on the 3rd of September, 1774, to return to Venice; he was their Secret Agent from that year until 1782. At the end of 1782 he left Venice; and it was in the spring of 1783 (not in the spring of 1784 as it was generally supposed) that Casanova was presented, at a banquet in Paris at the Venetian Ambassador's, by Abbate Eusebio della Luna, to Count Joseph Waldstein; he was invited by him to become his librarian at Dux; this he accepted, and for the fourteen remaining years of his life he lived at Dux, where he wrote his *Memoirs*.

It is impossible to conjecture when he commenced that prodigious task, as prodigious as his mental activity, as his vitality up to the age of seventy-three. The first reference to them occurs in *Histoire de ma Fuite des Prisons de la République de Venise, qu'on appelle les Plombs*, finished in 1787, printed at Leipzig in 1788. "Whenever I am seized by the desire of writing the story of all that has happened to me in the course of twenty-eight years that I have spent in wandering over the whole of Europe, up to that moment when it pleased the Inquisitors of State to give me permission to return to Venice in an honourable fashion (on the 3rd of September, 1774), I shall begin it at this point, and my readers will find it written with the same style, for there is no writer who has more than one."

There are some references to the *Memoirs* in his letters to Opiz; in one written in 1791, he says: "I write thirteen hours a day and these thirteen hours seem as if they were thirteen minutes. I amuse myself because I do not invent. What pains me most is that I am in duty bound to disguise certain names, for I have no authority to publish the affairs of others. I have written two-thirds of my *Life*, which will make six volumes. I say everything, I never spare myself, and yet I cannot as a man of honour give the name of *Confessions* to my *Memoirs*, for I make no repentance, and without repentance one cannot be absolved. Do you suppose I praise myself? Not at all." He writes on the 27th of July, 1792: "I have arrived at the end of my twelfth volume at the age of forty-seven. I must assure you that my *cynisme* is so outrageous in all the details of my too vivid adventures up to the age of fifty that my life would be a work, and such a work that the reading of it would be prohibited in every land where one loves good morals. I am a detestable man, and I don't care who knows it. Besides that, my instructed readers would divine the names of all the women and would cry out against my soul's perfidy." On the 20th of July, 1796, he writes: "*Pour ce qui regarde mes Mémoires, je crois que je les laisserai là, car depuis l'âge de cinquante ans je ne peux débiter que du triste, et cela me rend triste. Je ne les ai écrits que pour m'égaier avec mes lecteurs; actuellement je les affligerois, et cela ne vaut pas la peine.*"

There, evidently, he rings down the curtain, and for reasons known to himself alone. And yet he writes, near the end of his life, in reference to the year 1768: "If these *Memoirs*, written only to console myself in the dreadful weariness which is slowly killing me in Bohemia—and which, perhaps, would kill me anywhere else, since, though my body is old, my spirit and my desires are as young as ever—if these *Memoirs* are ever read, they will be read only when I am gone, and all censure will be lost on me. Why should I not be veracious? A man can have no object in deceiving himself, and it is chiefly for myself that I write."

III

Casanova died in 1798, but nothing was heard of the *Memoirs* (which the Prince de Ligne in his own *Memoirs* tells us Casanova had read to him, and in which he found "*du dramatique, de la rapidité, du comique, de la philosophie, des choses neuves, sublimes, inimitables même*") until the year 1820, when a certain Carlo Angiolini brought to the publishing house of Brockhaus, in Leipzig, a manuscript entitled *Histoire de ma vie jusqu'à l'an 1797*, in the handwriting of Casanova.

This manuscript, in its original state, has never been printed. Herr Brockhaus, on obtaining possession of the manuscript, had it translated into German by Wilhelm Schutz, but with many omissions and alterations, and published this translation, volume by volume, from 1822 to 1828, under the title, *Aus den Memoiren des Venetianers Jacob Casanova de Seingalt*. While the German edition was in course of publication, Herr Brockhaus employed a certain Jean Laforgue, a professor of the French language at Dresden, to revise the original manuscript, correcting Casanova's vigorous, but at times incorrect and often somewhat Italian French according to his own notions of elegant writing, suppressing passages which seemed too free-spoken from the point of view of morals and of politics, and altering the names of some of the persons referred to, or replacing those names by initials. This revised text was published in twelve volumes, the first two in 1826, the third and fourth in 1828, the fifth to the eighth in 1832, and the ninth to the twelfth in 1838; the first four bearing the imprint of Brockhaus at Leipzig and Ponthieu et Cie. at Paris, the next four the imprint of Heideloff et Campé at Paris, and the last four nothing but "*A Bruxelles*." The volumes are all uniform and were all really printed for the firm of Brockhaus.

IV

Casanova's *Memoirs* were proved to have been written by himself by Armand Baschet in his *Preuves curieuses de l'authenticité des Mémoires de Jacques Casanova de Seingalt* in *Le Livre*, 1881; these were corroborated by two articles of Alessandro d'Ancona in 1882. After these, the singular good fortune was reserved for me of being the first to discover the most interesting things contained in masses of Casanova's manuscripts preserved in Dux, done up in six large cardboard cases, the very existence of which was known only to a few, and to most of these only on hearsay. Beyond the publication of a few fragments, nothing at

that time, in 1899, had been done with these manuscripts, nor had an account of them ever been given by anyone who had been allowed to examine them, except myself. Baschet had never himself seen the manuscript of the *Memoirs*, but he had learnt all the facts about it from Messrs. Brockhaus, and he had himself examined the numerous papers relating to Casanova in the Venetian archives. A similar examination was made at the Frari at about the same time by the Abbé Fulin; and I myself, in 1894, not knowing at the time that the discovery had been already made, made it over again for myself. There the arrest of Casanova, his imprisonment in the *Piombi*, the exact date of his escape, the name of the monk who accompanied him, are all authenticated by documents contained in the *Riferte* of the Inquisitors of State; there are the bills for the repairs of the roof and walls of the cell from which he escaped; there are the reports of the spies on whose information he was arrested for his too dangerous free-spokenness in matters of religion and morality. The same archives contain forty-eight letters of Casanova to the Inquisitors of State, dating from 1763 to 1782, among the *Riferte dei Confidenti*, or reports of secret agents; the earliest asking permission to return to Venice, the rest giving information in regard to the immoralities of the city, after his return there; all in the same handwriting as the *Memoirs*.

In September, 1899, I was shown at Leipzig the actual manuscript *Histoire de ma Vie jusqu'à l'an 1797*, in Casanova's handwriting. The manuscript I examined is written on foolscap paper, rather rough and yellow; it is written on both sides of the page and in sheets or quires; here and there the paging shows that some pages have been omitted, and in their place are smaller sheets of thinner and whiter paper, all in Casanova's handsome, unmistakable handwriting. The manuscript is done up in twelve bundles, corresponding with the twelve volumes of the original edition, and in only one place is there a gap. The fourth and fifth chapters of the twelfth volume are missing, as the editor of the original edition points out, adding: "It is not probable that these two chapters have been withdrawn from the manuscript of Casanova by a strange hand; everything leads us to believe that the author himself suppressed them, with the intention, no doubt, of re-writing them, but without having found time to do so." And, as I have said, the manuscript ends with the year 1774.

Just here I may mention my own most important discovery at Dux; that is to say, a manuscript entitled *Extrait du Chapitre 4 et 5*. It is written on paper similar to that on which the *Memoirs* are written; the pages are numbered 104-108; and though it is described as *Extract*, it seems to contain, at all events, the greater part of the missing chapters in Volume Twelve. It is curious that this very important document, which supplies the one missing link in the *Memoirs*, should never have been discovered by any of the few people who have had the opportunity of looking over the Dux manuscripts. I am inclined to explain it by the fact that the case in which I found this manuscript contains some papers, not relating to Casanova.

There is a mass of evidence in letters, still extant, written during Casanova's lifetime, proving the genuineness of the *Memoirs*. For instance, on April 8th, 1791, Casanova writes to Carlo Grimani, saying "I have written the story of my life." He goes on to say that the MSS. will remain in the possession of Waldstein, who, he supposes, will print them after his death; supposing also that they would be printed in six or seven volumes in octavo. They were, as we know, printed in twelve volumes.

On January 17th, 1792, Waldstein writes to Casanova: "The story of your life will certainly give me pleasure, but I do not know how to have it brought to me, as there are no conveyances that come from Prague unless they come from Vienna." On August 1st, 1797, Cecilia Roggen-dorff writes: "You say in one of your letters that before you die you will bequeath to me the fifteen volumes of your *Memoirs*." In answer to this he sent her a copy of his *Précis de ma Vie*, dated September 17th, 1792, the original of which is in Dux.

It seems to me that there are many and good reasons for believing that Casanova actually and deliberately ended his *Memoirs* in 1774, in which year at the age of forty-nine he returned to Venice. References to the work in his later letter, already quoted (cf. Opiz above) seem to bear out this point. In his *Histoire de ma Fuite des Prisons* he definitely states that the proposed *Memoirs* will deal with his adventures "up to the moment when it pleased the State Inquisitors to give me permission to return to Venice in an honourable fashion." It ought to be remembered that Casanova wrote the *Memoirs* to kill the ennui of those last fourteen years at Dux when his bodily energy could no longer keep pace with the eagerness of his desires. In his narrative he lived over again those years when his youth and personal magnetism had carried everything before them. But, as he complains again and again, Fortune plays traitor to old age, so what could be more natural than to suppose that Casanova concluded his story when it ceased to stimulate him, and that his zest for autobiography stopped when he had come to a point in his confessions when the glamorous vagabond became the inglorious and somewhat despised secret agent?

v

In turning over the manuscripts in Leipzig, I read some of the suppressed passages and regretted their omission, for, having compared many of the pages, I found scarcely three consecutive sentences untouched; the damage done to the original text by Laforgue, who was employed to deform it, is incalculable. I therefore give here for the first time verbatim the passage that was copied out for me, which I have checked word for word.

"Page 58. *La première fois que le curé me fit l'honneur de me présenter à Son Excellence, je me suis très respectueusement opposé (page 59) à cette raison que tout le monde trouvoit sans réplique. Je lui ai dit qu'il n'avoit qu'à inviter à sa table ceux qui nature man-*

geaient comme deux.—Où sont-ils?—L'affaire est délicate. V. E. doit essayer des convives, et après les avoir trouvés tels que vous les désirez, savoir aussi vous les conserver sans leur en dire la raison; car il n'y a au monde personne de bien élevé qui voulût qu'on dise qu'il n'a l'honneur de manger avec V. E. que parce qu'il mange le double (de vous) d'un autre.

"Comprenant toute la force de mes paroles S. E. dit au curé de me conduire à dîner le lendemain. Ayant trouvé que si je donnois le précepte bien, je donnois l'exemple encore mieux, il me fit son commensal quotidien.

"Le sénateur, qui avoit renoncé à tout excepté qu'à lui-même, nourrissoit malgré son âge et sa goutte un penchant amoureux. Il aimait Thérèse, fille du comédien Imer, qui demouroit dans une maison voisine de son palais, dont les fenêtres étoient vis-à-vis de l'appartement où il couchoit. Cette fille, âgée alors de dix-sept ans, jolie, bizarre, coquette, qui apprenoit (alors) la musique pour aller l'exercer sur les Théâtres, qui se laissoit continuellement voir à ses fenêtres, et dont les charmes avoient déjà enivré le vieillard lui étoit cruelle. Elle venoit presque tous les jours lui faire une belle visite, mais toujours accompagnée de sa mère, vieille actrice qui s'étoit retirée du théâtre pour faire le salut de son âme, et qui avoit, comme de raison, formé le projet d'allier Dieu avec le diable. Elle conduisoit sa fille à la messe tous les jours, elle vouloit qu'elle allât à confesse tous les dimanches; mais l'après-dîner elle la menoit chez le vieillard amoureux, dont la fureur dans laquelle il tomboit s'épouvançoit quand elle lui refusoit un baiser, lui alléguant en raison qu'ayant fait ses dévotions le matin, elle ne pouvoit pas descendre à offenser ce même Dieu qu'elle avoit mangé, et qu'elle avoit peut-être (page 60) encore dans son estomac. Quel tableau pour moi, âgé alors de quinze ans, que le vieillard admettoit uniquement à être témoin silencieux de ces scènes! La scélérate mère applaudissoit la résistance de sa fille et osoit sermonner le voluptueux, qui à son tour n'osoit point réfuter ses maximes trop ou pas du tout chrétiennes, et qui devoit (détenir) résister à la tentation de lui jeter à la figure ce qui seroit tombé entre les mains (pour la faire jeter par la fenêtre). Il ne savoit que lui dire. La colère prenoit la place de la concupiscence; et après qu'elles étoient parties, il se soulageoit avec moi par des réflexions philosophiques. Obligé à lui répondre et ne sachant que lui dire, je lui ai un jour suggéré le mariage. Il m'a étonné, me répondant qu'elle ne vouloit pas devenir sa femme.—Pourquoi?—Parce qu'elle ne veut pas encourir la haine de (la) ma famille.—Offrez-lui une grosse somme, un état.—Elle ne voudroit pas, à ce qu'elle dit, commettre un péché mortel pour devenir reine du monde.—Il faut la violer, ou la chasser, la bannir de chez vous.—Je ne peux l'un; et je ne peux pas me déterminer à l'autre.—Tuez-la.—Cela arrivera si je ne meurs (mœurs) pas auparavant.—Votre Excellence est à plaindre.—Vas-tu jamais chez elle?—Non, car je pourrois en devenir amoureux; et si elle étoit vis-à-vis de moi telle que . . . je la vois ici, je deviendrois malheureux.—Tu as raison."

In 1906 and 1914 Octave Uzanne examined this same manuscript in Brockhaus' room, in order to verify the variants in the texts. "I can only say that the graphic clearness of this manuscript is admirable and gives one none of the sad sentiments one feels when one turns over old yellow-coloured papers—waste papers as it were—which exhale the odour of shrivelled sheets of paper, worm-eaten, decomposed by damp. One might imagine that those pages had been written but yesterday. The ink only varies somewhat in its firm black pressure, as if Casanova had pressed hard on the pen he used. The Holland is milk-white, it is in perfect preservation, and it is a pleasure to admire the fine penmanship of the Venetian writer. It is not the writing of an old man whose hand trembles, it is an original handwriting, *jeune d'allure*, perfectly legible, supple, a curious running handwriting, with very few erasures, 29 to 30 lines on each page, with lines that contain about ten or twelve words. To have obtained so wonderful a result, certainly Casanova must have copied this final text after numerous revisions and a definite judgment. In all his works he was a methodical and regular writer. The paging, besides, has a variety of numerals that bear witness to his suppressions and revisions."

VI

Among the innumerable exploits chronicled by Casanova there is one, to take an example out of many, the exact veracity of which I am inclined to dispute: the episode of the Jewish Esther in Holland; for Ravà, who also disbelieved in it, mentions among other facts that Casanova misleads us in regard to the dates of his two visits, misleads us in every possible manner, and adds to this the recent discovery that Thomas Hope, the famous banker, mentioned with the initials D—O—, *had no daughters!* Rather a Biblical statement. When I discovered Manon Baletti's letters in Dux—there were more than forty of them carefully tied together—I took it for granted that Casanova was correct in saying that she had returned him his own letters—at Amsterdam on Christmas Day, 1759—begging him to return hers or to burn them and, besides this, announcing her marriage; and that he had allowed Esther to read them, meaning to burn them afterwards, and that Esther begged to be allowed to keep them.

It now seems quite certain that, if Casanova has not misled us in regard to the entire Esther episode, he is not very near the truth as to the date of the rupture with Manon, for instead of in December, 1759, Manon's actual letters to Casanova come to an end the 7th of February, 1760, and Manon was married, as we know from the marriage register, on July 20th of the same year. There was certainly no rupture with the Balettis at this time, for Casanova was still on friendly terms and in correspondence with Manon's brother, who was in Paris, which is proved by several documents recently discovered at Dux; notably, a certain letter written to Casanova on the 24th of May, dated Paris, which says: "*Votre lettre, que m'a remise notre ami Baletti, m'a consolé.*"

This is what Casanova lets us suppose was Manon's last letter to him:

"Be wise and receive the news I give you calmly. The packet contains your portrait and all the letters you have written to me. Return me my portrait, and, if you have kept my letters, be kind enough to burn them. I rely on your honour. Think of me no more. Duty bids me do all I can to forget you, for at this time to-morrow I shall become the wife of M. Blondel of the Royal Academy, architect to the King. Please do not seem as if you knew me if we chance to meet on your return to Paris."

But it seems evident Manon herself either gave back to Casanova all her letters and his portrait or had them conveyed to him privately, and the reason of this must have been her fury of resentment against his ingratitude, his infidelities and his indifference. I can imagine that the terms of the letter she would have enclosed in the sealed packet would have been similar to those she uses in a letter dated July, 1750, in which she foresees, with a clear vision, the inevitable end of their relationship:

"Je vous demande, Monsieur, pour votre dernière preuve d'amitié, que vous me rendiez mes lettres, qui doivent avoir très peu de prix pour vous et qui sont pour moi de la dernière importance. A quoi vous seraient-elles bonnes, sinon qu'à vous reprocher un peu de dureté et à vous faire voir combien peu je la mérite? Vous aurez donc la bonté de me les rendre. Il vous sera plus facile alors d'oublier totalement la pauvre faible créature qui les a écrites. Si vous avez encore quelque ménagement pour moi, vous me les donnerez dans un moment où nous ne serons pas aperçus; je crois que ce soir après souper sera le moment le plus favorable."

It would be unfair to Casanova, if we did not make allowances for certain divergences from the original in the various editions. For instance, Casanova met in London Ange Gondar, a clever but unprincipled publicist, who introduced him to Sarah, an Irish barmaid. In my Rozez edition, 1863, Giacomo boasts that he seduced the girl while his rival tried in vain to open the locked door. Mr. Bleackley says in regard to the Rozez, which differs so widely from the others in the last two volumes, "that one would imagine that its editor had used another manuscript." That is not the fact. When I was in Leipzig in 1899, I examined the entire manuscript in the handwriting of Casanova; it is done up in twelve bundles, corresponding with the twelve volumes of the original edition. Last year I wrote to Brockhaus, asking him if the pages in the Rozez edition, 202-206 of the last volume, which relate a tragic adventure that happened to Casanova, were to be found in the original manuscript. He replied: "As to your inquiry, I beg to inform you that I have looked through the original manuscript, but I could not trace anywhere the tragic adventure that happened to Casanova in Madrid. I am unable to explain this divergence, but I think I am right in supposing that Rozez made additions of his own."

Made in his own likeness Casanova's women were not, nor were they creatures of his imagination, they were veritably creatures of flesh and blood, they were most often openly his mistresses. In fact, I had only to turn over, when I was in Dux, several hundred letters from women addressed to Casanova—which I was the first to discover—to realize that all these letters are written with fervour or with passion, and that Casanova should have so carefully preserved all these letters proves that his own fervour had not entirely abated.

Those letters! With what actuality they bring Casanova before us! One still sees the seals on the backs of many of them, on paper which has slightly yellowed with age, leaving the ink, however, almost always fresh. They come from Venice, Paris, Rome, Prague, Bayreuth, The Hague, Genoa, Fiume, Trieste, etc., and are addressed to as many places, often *Poste restante*. Some are in beautiful handwriting, on thick paper; others on scraps of paper, in painful hands, ill-spelt. A countess writes pitifully, imploring help; one protests her love, in spite of the "many chagrins" he has caused her; another asks "how they are to live together"; another laments that a report has gone about that she is secretly living with him, which may harm *his* reputation. Some are in French, more in Italian. "*Mon cher Giacometto*," writes one woman, in French; "*Carissimo e Amatissimo*," writes another, in Italian. These letters from women were in great confusion when I discovered them. Thus I found letters in the same handwriting separated by letters in other handwritings; many were undated, or dated only with the day of the week or month. There were a great many letters, dating from 1779 to 1786, signed "Francesca Buschini," a name which I cannot identify; they are written in Italian, and one of them begins: "*Unico Mio vero Amico*" (my only true friend). Others are signed Virginia B.; one of these is dated "Forli, October 15, 1773." There is also a Theresa B., who writes from Genoa. I was the first to identify Manon Baletti as the writer of a whole series of letters in French, very affectionate and intimate, usually unsigned, occasionally signed "B." She calls herself "*votre petite amie*"; or she ends with a half smiling, half reproachful "good-night, and sleep better than I." In one letter, sent from Paris in 1759, she writes: "Never believe me but when I tell you that I love you and that I shall love you always." In another letter, ill-spelt, as her letters often are, she writes: "Be assured that evil tongues, vapors, calumny, nothing can change my heart, which is yours entirely and has no will to change its master."

In turning over another manuscript, I was caught by the name Charpillon, which every reader of the *Memoirs* will remember as the name of the harpy by whom Casanova suffered so much in London, in 1763-4. This manuscript begins by saying: "I have been in London for six months and have been to see them (that is, the mother and daughter) in their own house," where he finds nothing but "swindlers, who cause all who go there to lose their money in gambling." This manuscript adds

some details to the story told in the ninth and tenth volumes of the *Memoirs*, and refers to the meeting with the Charpillons four and a half years before, described in volume five. It is written in a tone of great indignation. Elsewhere, I found a letter written by Casanova, but not signed, referring to an anonymous letter which he had received in reference to the Charpillons, and ending: "My handwriting is known."

VIII

But, though the letters from women naturally interested me the most, they were only a certain proportion of the great mass of correspondence which I turned over on my visit to Dux. There were letters from Carlo Angiolini, who was afterwards to bring the manuscript of the *Memoirs* to Brockhaus; from Balbi, the monk with whom Casanova escaped from the Piombi; from the Marquis Albergati, playwright, actor and eccentric, of whom there is some account in the *Memoirs*; from the Marquis Mosca, "a distinguished man of letters whom I was anxious to see," as Casanova tells us in the same volume in which he describes his visit to the Moscas at Pesaro; from Zulian, brother of the Duchess of Fiano; from Richard Lorrain, "*bel homme, ayant de l'esprit, le ton et le goût de la bonne société*," who came to settle at Gorizia in 1773, while Casanova was there; from the Procurator Morosini, whom he speaks of in the *Memoirs* as his "protector," and as one of those through whom he obtained permission to return to Venice. His other "protector," the Avogador Zaguri, had, says Casanova, "since the affair of the Marquis Albergati, carried on a most interesting correspondence with me"; and in fact I found a bundle of no less than a hundred and thirty-eight letters from him, dating from 1784 to 1798. Another bundle contains one hundred and seventy-two letters from Count Lamberg, mentioned in the *Memoirs*.

Among other documents directly relating to the *Memoirs* which I read at Dux are several attempts at a preface, written in Casanova's unmistakable hand, in which we see the actual preface coming gradually into form. One is entitled *Casanova au Lecteur*; another, *Histoire de mon Existence*; and a third *Préface*. There is also a brief and characteristic *Précis de ma Vie*, dated November 17, 1797. Some of these have been printed in *Le Livre*, 1887.

One manuscript I found tells with great piquancy the whole story of the Abbé de Brosses' ointment, the curing of the Princesse de Conti's pimples, and the birth of the Duc de Montpensier, which is told very briefly, and with much less point, in the *Memoirs*. There is an account of the duel at Warsaw with Count Branicki in 1766, mentioned in the *Memoirs*, an affair which attracted a good deal of attention at the time, in a letter from the Abbé Taruffi to the dramatist, Francesco Albergati, dated Warsaw, March 19, 1766, quoted in Ernesto Masi's *Life of Albergati*, Bologna, 1878. A manuscript at Dux in Casanova's handwriting gives an account of this duel in the third person; it is entitled: "*Description de l'affaire arrivée à Varsovie le 5 Mars, 1766*." D'Ancona, in the "Nuova Antalogia," referring to the Abbé Taruffi's account, mentions

what he considers to be a slight discrepancy: that Taruffi refers to the *danseuse* about whom the duel was fought as La Casacci, while Casanova refers to her as La Catai. In this manuscript Casanova always refers to her as La Casacci; La Catai is evidently one of M. Laforge's arbitrary alterations of the text.

One of the most amusing papers was an anecdote and its commentary, perhaps jotted down for use in that latter part of the *Memoirs* which was never to be written. Here is a single sheet, dated "this 2nd September, 1791," and headed *Souvenir*:

"The Prince de Rosenberg said to me, as we went down stairs, that Madame de Rosenberg was dead, and asked me if the Comte de Waldstein had in the library the illustration of the Villa d'Altichiero, which the Emperor had asked for in vain at the city library of Prague, and when I answered 'yes,' he gave an equivocal laugh. A moment afterwards, he asked me if he might tell the Emperor. 'Why not, mon-sieur? It is not a secret. Is His Majesty coming to Dux?' 'If he goes to Oberlaitensdorff (*sic*) he will go to Dux, too; and he may ask you for it, for there is a monument there which relates to him when he was Grand Duke.' 'In that case, His Majesty can also see my critical remarks on the Egyptian prints.'

"The Emperor asked me this morning, 6th October, how I employed my time at Dux, and I told him I was making an Italian anthology. 'You have all the Italians, then?' 'All, sire.' See what a lie leads to. If I had not lied in saying that I was making an anthology I should not have found myself obliged to lie again in saying that we have all the Italian poets.

"If the Emperor comes to Dux, I shall kill myself."

In the *Memoirs* Casanova tells how he quarrelled with Voltaire because Voltaire had told him frankly that his translation of *L'Ecosaise* was a bad translation. It is piquant to read another note written in this style of righteous indignation:

"Voltaire, the hardy Voltaire, whose pen is without bit or bridle; Voltaire, who devoured the *Bible*, and ridiculed our dogmas, doubts, and, after having made proselytes to impiety, is not ashamed, being reduced to the extremity of life, to ask for the sacraments and to cover his body with more relics than St. Louis had at Amboise."

Here is an argument also very much in keeping with the tone of the *Memoirs*:

"A girl who is pretty and good, and as virtuous as you please, ought not to take it ill that a man, carried away by her charms, should set himself to the task of making their conquest. If this man cannot please her by any means, even if his passion be criminal, she ought never to take offence at it nor treat him unkindly; she ought to be gentle and pity him, if she does not love him, and think it enough to keep invincible hold upon her own duty."

Occasionally he touches upon æsthetical matters, as in a fragment which begins with this liberal definition of beauty:

"'Harmony makes beauty,' says M. de S. P. (Bernardin de St. Pierre), but the definition is too short, if he thinks he has said everything. Here is mine. Remember that the subject is metaphysical. 'An object really beautiful ought to seem beautiful to all whose eyes fall upon it.' That is all; there is nothing more to be said."

"They say that this Dux is a delightful spot," says Casanova in one of the most personal of his notes, "and I see that it might be for many, but not for me, for what delights me in my old age is independent of the place which I inhabit. When I do not sleep, I dream, and, when I am tired of dreaming, I blacken paper; then I read, and most often reject all that my pen has vomited." Here we see him blackening paper on every occasion and for every purpose. In one bundle I found an unfinished story about Roland and some adventures with women in a cave; then a *Meditation on Arising from Sleep*, 19th May, 1789; then a *Short Reflection of a Philosopher Who Finds Himself Thinking of Procuring His Own Death*; again, *At Dux, on getting out of bed on the 13th October, 1793—a day dedicated to St. Lucy, memorable in my too long life*. A big budget, containing cryptograms, is headed *Grammatical Lottery*; and there is the title page of a treatise on *The Duplication of the Hexahedron, demonstrated geometrically to all the Universities and all the Academies of Europe*. There are innumerable verses, French and Italian, in all stages, occasionally attaining the finality of these lines, which appear in half a dozen tentative forms:

*Sans mystère point de plaisirs,
Sans silence point de mystère.
Charme divin de mes loisirs,
Solitude! que tu m'es chère!*

Then there are a number of more or less complete manuscripts of some extent. There is the manuscript of the translation of Homer's *Iliad in ottava rima* (published in Venice, 1775-78); of the *Histoire de Venise*, of the *Icosameron*, a curious book published in 1787, purporting to be "translated from English," but really an original work of Casanova; *Philocalies sur les Sottises des Mortels*, a long manuscript never published; the sketch and beginning of *Le Polémarque, ou la Calomnie démasquée par la présence d'esprit, Tragicomédie en trois actes, composée à Dux dans le mois de Juin de l'Année, 1791*, which recurs again under the form of the *Polémoscope: La Lorgnette menteuse, ou la Calomnie démasquée*, acted before the Princesse de Ligne at her château at Teplitz, 1791. There is a treatise in Italian, *Delle Passioni*; there are long dialogues, such as *Le Philosophe et le Théologien*, and *Rêve: Dieu-Moi*; there is the *Songe d'un Quart d'Heure*, divided into minutes; there is the very lengthy criticism of Bernardin de Saint-Pierre; there is the *Confutation d'une Censure indiscreète qu'on lit dans la Gazette de Jéna, 19 Juin, 1789*; with another large manuscript, unfortunately imperfect, first called *L'Insulte*, and then *Placet au Public*, dated "Dux, this 2nd March, 1790," referring to the same criticism on the *Icosameron* and the *Fuite des Prisons*. *L'Histoire de ma Fuite des Prisons de la République*

de Venise, qu'on appelle les Plombs, which is the first draft of the most famous part of the *Memoirs*, was published at Leipzig in 1788, and, having read it in the Marcian Library at Venice, I am not surprised to learn from this indignant document that it was printed "under the care of a young Swiss, who had the talent to commit a hundred faults of orthography."

I came upon a variety of small papers, among which were jumbled together on the same and on separate scraps of paper washing-bills, accounts, hotel bills, lists of letters written, first drafts of letters with many erasures, notes on books, theological and mathematical notes, Latin quotations, French and Italian verses, with variants, a long list of classical names which have and have not been "*francisés*," with reasons for and against; "what I must wear at Dresden"; headings without anything to follow, such as: *Reflexions on respiration, on the true cause of youth—the crows*; a new method of winning the lottery at Rome; recipes, among which is a long printed list of perfumes sold at Spa, a newspaper cutting, dated Prague, 25 October, 1790, on the thirty-seventh balloon ascent of Blanchard; thanks to some "noble donor" for the gift of a dog called Finette; a passport for "*Monsieur de Casanova, Vénétien, allant d'ici en Hollande*," October 13, 1758 ("*Ce passeport bon pour quinze jours*"), together with an order for post-horses, gratis, from Paris to Bordeaux and Bayonne.

Occasionally, from these papers I obtained a glimpse into his daily life at Dux, as in this note, scribbled on a fragment of paper (here and always I translate the French literally): "I beg you to tell my servant what the biscuits are that I like to eat, dipped in wine, to fortify my stomach. I believe that they can all be found at Roman's." Usually, however, these notes, though often suggested by something closely personal, branch off into more general considerations; or else begin with general considerations, and end with a case in point. Thus, for instance, a fragment of three pages begins: "A compliment which is made only to gild the pill is a positive impertinence, and Monsieur Bailli is nothing but a charlatan; the monarch ought to have spat in his face, but the monarch trembled with fear." A manuscript entitled *Essai d'Egoïsme*, dated "Dux, this 27th June, 1769," contains, in the midst of various reflections, an offer to let his *appartement* in return for enough money to "tranquillise for six months two Jew creditors at Prague." Another manuscript is headed *Pride and Folly*, and begins with a long series of antitheses, such as: "All fools are not proud, and all proud men are fools. Many fools are happy, all proud men are unhappy."

Here, as so often in these manuscripts, we seem to see Casanova thinking on paper. He uses scraps of paper (sometimes the blank page of a letter, on the other side of which we see the address) as a kind of informal diary; and it is characteristic of him, of the infinitely curious mind which this adventurer possessed, that there are so few merely personal notes among these casual jottings found among his remains.

IX

The world of his *Memoirs* is not a world of his invention, as these papers eloquently prove; yet, when he warmed up to the theme of his exploits, he sometimes invented enormously and lied prodigiously, albeit entertainingly and delightfully. Our Venetian, like any true vagabond, could not resist what he called *sa folie vagabonde*. Wherever he went, adventures fell his way, and, incredible or not, there is a spark illumines his telling of them. He belonged to an age when the human animal exalted the satisfaction of the senses, and he was, above all, a man of his age.

ARTHUR SYMONS.

LONDON, *September*, 1924.

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

IN the years 1888-1889 I was very busy indeed. My days and nights were spent in translating from the French; and there was a curious diversity in the books that I was rendering and in the manner of the two operations.

At that time I was employed by a firm of second-hand booksellers, whose shop was somewhere in the neighbourhood of Leicester Square. They dealt in the more precious and curious books; in books bound by the great masters of the art of bookbinding, in books illustrated by Fragonard and his fellows of the eighteenth century, in books known only to the elder school of collectors. I was the unworthy cataloguer of this firm of Cheeryble Brothers, and in the course of my calling I came upon a queer little duodecimo, bearing (I think) the date 1610. This was the first edition of *Le Moyen de Parvenir*, by Bervalde de Verville; and something queer, bizarre, fantastic in the text enchanted me. I resolved to translate it, and, having bought a modern edition at Nutt's in the Strand, there where the street grew narrow between St. Mary-le-Strand and St. Clement Dane's—all vanished now, alas!—I set about turning the most difficult book in the French language into English; all just for fun and the joy of the adventure. At twenty-six one has the oddest notions of amusement.

This was the business—rather, the pleasure—of the evenings in my rooms—or was it room?—in Great Russell Street. But my serious occupation, that by which I lived, was carried on in the daytime, in a strange place in the bowels of the earth beneath the shop of the Brothers Cheeryble. There I translated Casanova day after day, and lived by these labours for more than a year.

It was, probably, all to the good, both for me and my work, that the two books were in such violent contrast. The one, *Le Moyen de Parvenir*, a very spider-web puzzle and labyrinth both in thought and in language; the other, Casanova's *Memoirs*, lucidity itself. And, accordingly, I attacked the two labours very differently. Casanova's French, as I say, was all clarity. There was no doubt as to the sense of a single phrase; there were no shades of meaning to be considered. It was simply an affair of rendering the clear and lively French into the easiest English that I could summon to my pen. And I found the

best way of keeping up the brisk current of language was to put my watch on the table and see how fast I could turn a page of French into a page of English. I think I beat down the record from ten minutes to seven or even to six and a half; and the faster the pen sped the better the task was done. At night, everything was different; painful, slow, laborious schemes and works and contrivances—this giving of the French scholar-clown of the seventeenth century a fitting English dress.

Each labour had its peculiar joys. I need not speak now of Bervalde de Verville; as to Casanova, the parts of him which I recall with the greatest pleasure are the small adventures and the back alley business rather than the meetings with kings and popes and philosophers. I like to hear of little things; of the supper of pork chops that the *scopatore santissimo* provided for his guests; of the ways of Italian strolling players in the eighteenth century "fit-ups"; of that magic figure that the witch was to bathe in blood; of the significant salad prepared in the Casino at Venice; of the Italian scholar correcting proofs of the Decameron in a London coffee-house. There are some people who prefer the small talk in the dressing-room to the larger speech of the stage, and I am one of them. The Cabala of Casanova, which cost Madame d'Urfé so dearly, is, at all events, much more entertaining than the Cabala of Knorr von Rosenroth.

ARTHUR MACHEN.

LONDON, September, 1924.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

I WILL begin with this confession: whatever I have done in the course of my life, whether it be good or evil, has been done freely; I am a free agent.

The doctrine of the Stoics or of any other sect as to the force of Destiny is a bubble engendered by the imagination of man, and is near akin to Atheism. I not only believe in one God, but my faith as a Christian is also grafted upon that tree of philosophy which has never spoiled anything.

I believe in the existence of an immaterial God, the Author and Master of all beings and all things, and I feel that I never had any doubt of His existence, from the fact that I have always relied upon His providence, prayed to Him in my distress, and that He has always granted my prayers. Despair brings death, but prayer does away with despair; and, when a man has prayed, he feels himself supported by new confidence and endowed with power to act. As to the means employed by the Sovereign Master, of human beings to avert impending dangers from those who beseech His assistance, I confess that the knowledge of them is above the intelligence of man, who can but wonder and adore. Our ignorance becomes our only resource, and happy, truly happy, are those who cherish their ignorance! Therefore must we pray to God, and believe that He has granted the favour we have been praying for, even when in appearance it seems the reverse. As to the position which our body ought to assume when we address ourselves to the Creator, a line of Petrarch settles it:

Con le ginocchia della mente inchine.

"Man is free, but his freedom ceases when he has no faith in it"; and the greater power he ascribes to faith, the more he deprives himself of that power which God has given to him when He endowed him with the gift of reason. Reason is a particle of the Creator's divinity. When we use it with a spirit of humility and justice we are certain to please the Giver of that precious gift. God ceases to be God only for those who can admit the possibility of His non-existence, and that conception is in itself the most severe punishment they can suffer.

Man is free; yet we must not suppose that he is at liberty to do everything he pleases, for he becomes a slave the moment he allows his actions to be ruled by passion. The man who has sufficient power over himself to wait until his nature has recovered its even balance is the truly wise man, but such beings are seldom met with.

The reader of these *Memoirs* will discover that I never had any fixed aim before my eyes, and that my system, if it can be called a system, has been to glide away unconcernedly on the stream of life, trusting to the wind wherever it led. How many changes arise from such an independent mode of life! My success and my misfortunes, the bright and the dark days I have gone through, everything has proved to me that in this world, either physical or moral, good comes out of evil just as well as evil comes out of good. My errors will point to thinking men the various roads and will teach them the great art of treading on the brink of the precipice without falling into it. It is only necessary to have courage, for strength without self-confidence is useless. I have often met with happiness after some imprudent step which ought to have brought ruin upon me, and, although passing a vote of censure upon myself, I would thank God for His mercy. But, by way of compensation, dire misfortune has befallen me in consequence of actions prompted by the most cautious wisdom. This would humble me; yet, conscious that I had acted rightly, I would easily derive comfort from that conviction.

In spite of a good foundation of sound morals, the natural offspring of the Divine principles which had been early rooted in my heart, I have been throughout my life the victim of my senses; I have found delight in losing the right path, I have constantly lived in the midst of error, with no consolation but the consciousness of my being mistaken. Therefore, dear reader, I trust that, far from attaching to my history the character of impudent boasting, you will find in my *Memoirs* only the characteristic proper to a general confession, and that my narratory style will be the manner neither of a repenting sinner, nor of a man ashamed to acknowledge his frolics. They are the follies inherent to youth; I make sport of them, and, if you are kind, you will not yourself refuse them a good-natured smile. You will be amused when you see that I have more than once deceived, without the slightest qualm of conscience, both knaves and fools. As to the deceit perpetrated upon women, let it pass, for, when love is in the way, men and women as a general rule dupe each other. But on the score of fools, it is a very different matter. I always feel the greatest bliss when I recollect those I have caught in my snares, for fools generally are insolent and so self-conceited that they challenge wit. We avenge intellect when we dupe a fool, and it is a victory not to be despised, for a fool is covered with steel, and it is often very hard to find his vulnerable part. In fact, to gull a fool seems to me an exploit worthy of a witty man. I have felt in my very blood, ever since I was born, a most unconquerable hatred towards the whole tribe of fools, and it arises from the fact that I feel myself a blockhead when-

ever I am in their company. I am very far from placing them in the same class with those men whom we call stupid, for the latter are stupid only from deficient education, and I rather like them. I have met with some of them—very honest fellows, who, with all their stupidity, had a kind of intelligence and an upright good sense, which cannot be the characteristics of fools. They are like eyes veiled with the cataract, which, if the disease could be removed, would be very beautiful.

Dear reader, examine the spirit of this preface, and you will at once guess at my purpose. I have written a preface because I wish you to know me thoroughly before you begin the reading of my *Memoirs*. It is only in a coffee-room or at a table d'hôte that we like to converse with strangers.

I have written the history of my life, and I have a perfect right to do so; but am I wise in throwing it before a public of which I know nothing but evil? No, I am aware it is sheer folly, but I want to be busy, I want to laugh, and why should I deny myself this gratification?

Expulit elleboro morbum bilemque mero.

An ancient author tells us somewhere, with the tone of a pedagogue, "If you have not done anything worthy of being recorded, at least write something worthy of being read." It is a precept as beautiful as a diamond of the first water cut in England, but it cannot be applied to me, because I have not written either a novel or the life of an illustrious character. Worthy or not, my life is my subject, and my subject is my life. I have lived without dreaming that I should ever take a fancy to write the history of my life, and for that very reason, my *Memoirs* may claim from the reader an interest and a sympathy which they would not have obtained, had I always entertained the design to write them in my old age, and, still more, to publish them.

I have reached, in 1797, the age of three-score years and twelve; I can now say "*Vixi*," and I could not find a more agreeable pastime than to relate my own adventures and to cause pleasant laughter amongst the good company listening to me, from which I have received so many tokens of friendship, and in the midst of which I have ever lived. To enable me to write well, I have only to think that my readers will belong to that polite society:

Quæcunque dixi, si placuerint, dictavit auditor.

Should there be a few intruders whom I cannot prevent from perusing my *Memoirs*, I must find comfort in the idea that my history was not written for them.

By recollecting the pleasures I have had formerly, I renew them, I enjoy them a second time, while I laugh at the remembrance of troubles now past, which I no longer feel. A member of this great universe, I speak to the air, and I fancy myself rendering an account of my administration, as a steward is wont to do before leaving his

situation. For my future I have no concern, and, as a true philosopher, I never would have any, for I know not what it may be: as a Christian, on the other hand, faith must believe without discussion, and, the stronger it is, the more it keeps silent. I know that I have lived because I have felt, and, feeling giving me the knowledge of my existence, I know likewise that I shall exist no more when I shall have ceased to feel.

Should I perchance still feel after my death, I would no longer have any doubt, but I would most certainly give the lie to anyone asserting before me that I was dead.

The history of my life must begin by the earliest circumstances which my memory can evoke; it will therefore commence when I had attained the age of eight years and four months. Before that time, if "to think is to live" be a true axiom, I did not live, I could only lay claim to a stage of vegetation. The mind of a human being is formed only of comparisons made in order to examine analogies, and therefore cannot precede the existence of memory. The mnemonic organ was developed in my head only eight years and four months after my birth; it is then that my soul began to be susceptible of receiving impressions. How is it possible for an immaterial substance, which can neither touch nor be touched, to receive impressions? It is a mystery which man cannot unravel.

A certain philosophy, full of consolation and in perfect accord with religion, pretends that the state of dependence in which the soul stands in relation to the senses and to the organs is only incidental and transient and that it will reach a condition of freedom and happiness when the death of the body shall have delivered it from that state of tyrannic subjection. This is very fine, but, apart from religion, where is the proof of it all? Therefore, as I cannot, from my own information, have a perfect certainty of my being immortal until the dissolution of my body has actually taken place, people must kindly bear with me if I am in no hurry to obtain that certain knowledge, for, in my estimation, a knowledge to be gained at the cost of life is a rather expensive piece of information. In the meantime I worship God, laying every wrong action under an interdict which I endeavour to respect, and I loathe the wicked without doing them any injury. I only abstain from doing them any good, in the full belief that we ought not to cherish serpents.

As I must likewise say a few words respecting my nature and my temperament, I premise that the most indulgent of my readers is not likely to be the most dishonest or the least gifted with intelligence.

I have had in turn every temperament: phlegmatic in my infancy, sanguine in my youth, later on, bilious, and now I have a disposition which engenders melancholy and most likely will never change. I always made my food congenial to my constitution, and my health was always excellent. I learned very early that our health is always impaired by some excess either of food or of abstinence, and I never had any physician except myself. I am bound to add that the excess

in *too little* has ever proved in me more dangerous than the excess in *too much*; the last may cause indigestion, but the first causes death.

Now, old as I am and although enjoying good digestive organs, I must have only one meal every day; but I find a set-off to that privation in my delightful sleep and in the ease which I experience in writing down my thoughts without having recourse to paradox or sophism, which would be calculated to deceive myself even more than my readers, for I never could make up my mind to palm counterfeit coin upon them if I knew it to be such.

The sanguine temperament rendered me very sensible to the attractions of voluptuousness; I was always cheerful and ever ready to pass from one enjoyment to another, and I was at the same time very skilful in inventing new pleasures. Thence, I suppose, my natural disposition to make fresh acquaintances, and to break with them so readily, although always for a good reason and never through mere fickleness. The errors caused by temperament are not to be corrected, because our temperament is perfectly independent of our strength; it is not the case with our character. Heart and head are the constituent parts of character; temperament has almost nothing to do with it, and, therefore, character is dependent upon education and is susceptible of being corrected and improved.

I leave to others the decision as to the good or evil tendencies of my character, but, such as it is, it shines upon my countenance, and there it can easily be detected by any physiognomist. It is only on the face that character can be read; there it lies exposed to the view. It is worthy of remark that men who have no peculiar cast of countenance—and there are a great many such men—are likewise totally deficient in peculiar characteristics, and we may establish the rule that varieties in physiognomy are equivalent to differences in character. I am aware that throughout my life my actions have received their impulse more from the force of feeling than from the wisdom of reason, and this has led me to acknowledge that my conduct has been dependent upon my nature more than upon my mind; both are generally at war, and in the midst of their continual collisions I have never found in me sufficient mind to balance my nature, or enough strength in my nature to counteract the power of my mind. But enough of this, for there is truth in the old saying: "*Si brevis esse volo, obscurus fio*," and I believe that, without offending against modesty, I can apply to myself the following words of my dear Virgil:

*Nec sum adeo informis: nuper me in litore vidi
Cum placidum ventis staret mare.*

The chief business of my life has always been to indulge my senses; I never knew anything of greater importance. I felt myself born for the fair sex, I have ever loved it dearly, and I have been loved by it as often and as much as I could. I have likewise always had a great weakness for good living, and I ever felt passionately fond of every object which excited my curiosity.

I have had friends who have acted kindly towards me, and it has been my good fortune to have it in my power to give them substantial proofs of my gratitude. I have had also bitter enemies who have persecuted me and whom I have not crushed simply because I could not do it. I never would have forgiven them, had I not lost the memory of all the injuries they had heaped upon me. The man who forgets does not forgive, he only loses the remembrance of the harm inflicted upon him; forgiveness is the offspring of a feeling of heroism, of a noble heart, of a generous mind; whilst forgetfulness is only the result of a weak memory, or of an easy carelessness, and still oftener of a natural desire for calm and quietness. Hatred, in the course of time, kills the unhappy wretch who delights in nursing it in his bosom.

Should anyone bring against me an accusation of sensuality, he would be wrong, for all the fierceness of my senses never caused me to neglect any of my duties. For the same excellent reason, the accusation of drunkenness ought not to have been brought against Homer:

Laudibus arguitur vini vinosus Homerus.

I have always been fond of highly-seasoned, rich dishes, such as macaroni prepared by a skilful Neapolitan cook, the *olla podrida* of the Spaniards, the glutinous codfish from Newfoundland, game with a strong flavour, and cheese the perfect state of which is attained when the tiny animalculæ formed from its very essence begin to show signs of life. As for women, I have always found the odour of my beloved ones exceedingly pleasant.

"What depraved tastes!" some people will exclaim. "Are you not ashamed to confess such inclinations without blushing?" Dear critics, you make me laugh heartily! Thanks to my coarse tastes, I believe myself happier than other men, because I am convinced that they enhance my enjoyment. Happy are those who know how to obtain pleasures without injury to anyone; insane are those who fancy that the Almighty can enjoy the sufferings, the pains, the fasts and abstinences which they offer to Him as a sacrifice, and that His love is granted only to those who tax themselves so foolishly. God can demand from His creatures only the practice of virtues the seed of which He has sown in their soul, and all He has given unto us has been intended for our happiness: self-love, thirst for praise, emulation, strength, courage and a power of which nothing can deprive us—the power of self-destruction, if, after due calculation, whether false or just, we unfortunately reckon death to be advantageous. This is the strongest proof of our moral freedom so much attacked by sophists. Yet this power of self-destruction is repugnant to nature and has been rightly opposed by every religion.

A so-called free-thinker told me at one time that I could not consider myself a philosopher if I placed any faith in revelation. But when we accept it readily in physics, why should we reject it in religious matters? The form alone is the point in question. The spirit speaks to the spirit and not to the ears. The principles of everything we are acquainted with

must necessarily have been revealed to those from whom we have received them by the great, supreme principle which contains them all. The bee erecting its hive, the swallow building its nest, the ant constructing its cave and the spider warping its web, would never have done anything but for a previous and everlasting revelation. We must either believe that it is so or admit that matter is endowed with thought. But, as we dare not pay such a compliment to matter, let us stand by revelation.

The great philosopher who, having deeply studied nature, thought he had found the truth because he acknowledged nature as God died too soon. Had he lived a little while longer, he would have gone much farther, and yet his journey would have been but a short one, for, finding himself in his Author, he could not have denied Him: "In Him we move and have our being." He would have found Him inscrutable, and thus would have ended his journey.

God, great principle of all minor principles, God, who is Himself without a principle, could not conceive Himself if, in order to do it, He required to know His own principle.

Oh, blissful ignorance! Spinoza, the virtuous Spinoza, died before he could possess it. He would have died a learned man and with a right to the reward his virtue deserved, if he had only supposed his soul to be immortal!

It is not true that a wish for reward is unworthy of real virtue and throws a blemish upon its purity. Such a pretension, on the contrary, helps to sustain virtue, man being himself too weak to consent to be virtuous only for his own gratification. I hold as a myth that Amphiarus who preferred to be good than to seem good. In fact, I do not believe there is an honest man alive without some pretension, and here is mine.

I pretend to the friendship, to the esteem, to the gratitude of my readers. I claim their gratitude if my *Memoirs* can give them instruction and pleasure; I claim their esteem if, rendering me justice, they find more good qualities in me than faults, and I claim their friendship as soon as they deem me worthy of it by the candour and the good faith with which I abandon myself to their judgment, without disguise and exactly as I am in reality. They will find that I have always had such sincere love for truth that I have often begun by telling stories for the purpose of getting truth to enter the heads of those who could not appreciate its charms. They will not form a wrong opinion of me when they see me emptying the purse of my friends to satisfy my fancies, for those friends entertained idle schemes, and, by giving them the hope of success, I trusted to disappointment to cure them. I would deceive them to make them wiser, and I did not consider myself guilty, for I applied to my own enjoyment sums of money which would have been lost in the vain pursuit of possessions denied by nature; therefore I was not actuated by any avaricious rapacity. I might think myself guilty if I were rich now, but I have nothing. I have squandered everything; it is my comfort and my justification. The money was intended for extra-

gant follies, and, by applying it to my own frolics, I did not turn it into a very different channel.

If I were deceived in my hope to please, I candidly confess I would regret it, but not sufficiently so to repent having written my *Memoirs*, for, after all, writing them has given me pleasure. Oh, *cruel ennui*! It must be by mistake that those who have invented the torments of hell have forgotten to ascribe thee the first place among them. Yet I am bound to own that I entertain a great fear of hisses; it is too natural a fear for me to boast of being insensible to them, and I cannot find any solace in the idea that, when these *Memoirs* are published, I shall be no more. I cannot think without a shudder of contracting any obligations towards death; I hate death; for, happy or miserable, life is the only blessing which man possesses, and those who do not love it are unworthy of it. If we prefer honour to life, it is because life is blighted by infamy; and if, in the alternative, man sometimes throws away his life, philosophy must remain silent.

Oh, death! cruel death! Fatal law which nature necessarily rejects because thy very office is to destroy nature! Cicero says that death frees us from all pains and sorrows, but this great philosopher books all the expense without taking the receipts into account. I do not recollect if, when he wrote his *Tusculan Disputations*, his own Tullia was dead. Death is a monster which turns away from the great theatre an attentive hearer before the end of the play which deeply interests him, and this is reason enough to hate it.

All my adventures are not to be found in these *Memoirs*; I have left out those which might have offended the persons who have played a sorry part therein. In spite of this reserve, my readers will perhaps often think me indiscreet, and I am sorry for it. Should I perchance become wiser before I give up the ghost, I might burn every one of these sheets, but now I have not courage enough to do it.

It may be that certain love scenes will be considered too explicit, but let no one blame me, unless it be for lack of skill, for I ought not to be scolded because, in my old age, I can find no other enjoyment but that which recollections of the past afford to me. After all, virtuous and prudish readers are at liberty to skip over any offensive pictures, and I think it my duty to give them this piece of advice; so much the worse for those who may not read my preface; it is no fault of mine if they do not, for everyone ought to know that a preface is to a book what the play-bill is to a comedy; both must be read.

My *Memoirs* are not written for young persons, who, in order to avoid false steps and slippery roads, ought to spend their youth in blissful ignorance, but for those who, having thorough experience of life, are no longer exposed to temptation, and who, having but too often gone through the fire, are like salamanders and can be scorched by it no more. True virtue is but a habit, and I have no hesitation in saying that the really virtuous are those persons who can practice virtue without the slightest trouble; such persons are always full of toleration; and it is to them that my *Memoirs* are addressed.

I have written in French, and not in Italian, because the French language is more universal than mine, and the purists who may criticise in my style some Italian turns will be quite right, but only in case it should prevent them from understanding me clearly. The Greeks admired Theophrastus in spite of his Eresian style, and the Romans delighted in their Livy in spite of his Patavinity. Provided I amuse my readers, it seems to me that I can claim the same indulgence. After all, every Italian reads Algarotti with pleasure, although his works are full of French idioms.

There is one thing worthy of notice: of all the living languages belonging to the republic of letters, the French tongue is the only one which has been condemned by its masters never to borrow in order to become richer; whilst all other languages, although richer in words than the French, plunder from it words and constructions of sentences, whenever they find that by such robbery they add something to their own beauty. Yet those who borrow the most from the French, are the most forward in trumpeting the poverty of that language, very likely thinking that such an accusation justifies their depredations. It is said that the French language has attained the apogee of its beauty, and that the smallest foreign loan would spoil it, but I make bold to assert that this is prejudice, for, although it certainly is the most clear, the most logical of all languages, it would be great temerity to affirm that it can never go farther or higher than it has gone. We all recollect that, in the days of Lulli, there was but one opinion of his music, yet Rameau came and everything was changed. The new impulse given to the French nation may open new and unexpected horizons, and new beauties, fresh perfections, may spring up from new combinations and from new wants.

The motto I have adopted justifies my digressions, and all the commentaries, perhaps too numerous, in which I indulge upon my various exploits: *Nequidquam sapit qui sibi non sapit*. For the same reason I have always felt a great desire to receive praise and applause from polite society:

*Excitat auditor studium, laudataque virtus
Crescit, et immensum gloria calcar habet.*

I would willingly have displayed here the proud axiom: *Nemo læditur nisi a se ipso*, had I not feared to offend the immense number of persons who, whenever anything goes wrong with them, are wont to exclaim, "It is no fault of mine!" I cannot deprive them of that small particle of comfort, for, were it not for it, they would soon feel hatred for themselves, and self-hatred often leads to the fatal idea of self-destruction.

As for myself, I always willingly acknowledge my own self as the principal cause of every good or of every evil which may befall me; therefore I have always found myself capable of being my own pupil, and ready to love my teacher.

CASANOVA DE SEINGALT.

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ILLUSTRATIONS

VOLUME I

Surely his portraits as well as his writings prove that he was vividly alive, full of fiery energy and calm resource. He was a thinker and fighter in one; a scholar, an adventurer, perhaps a Cabalist, a busy stirrer in politics, a gamester, one "born for the fairer sex" as he tells us, and born also to be a vagabond
.....FRONTISPIECE

Her firm and easy walk, the natural freedom of all her movements, a charming look which seemed to say, "I am very glad that you think me pretty," everything, in short, caused the ardent fire of amorous desires to circulate through my veins.....338

The ducal court residing then at Colorno, a great entertainment was given in the gardens, which were to be illuminated all night. Dubois, the fatal hunchback appointed by destiny, accompanied us, and in the evening we walked through the gardens.....426

Having no one to give me a helping hand, I resolved to go myself to the parapet to lift the ladder and attain the end I had in view. I did so, but at such a hazard as almost to cost me my life764

THE MEMOIRS OF
JACQUES CASANOVA
DE SEINGALT

CHAPTER I

DON JACOB CASANOVA, the illegitimate son of Don Francisco Casanova, was a native of Saragossa, the capital of Aragon, and in the year 1428 he carried off Donna Anna Palafox from her convent, on the day after she had taken the veil. He was secretary to King Alfonso. He ran away with her to Rome, where, after one year of imprisonment, the pope Martin III released Anna from her vows and gave them the nuptial blessing at the instance of Don Juan Casanova, major-domo of the Vatican and uncle of Don Jacob. All the children born from that marriage died in their infancy, with the exception of Don Juan, who in 1475 married Donna Eleonora Albini, by whom he had a son, Marco Antonio.

In 1481 Don Juan, having killed an officer of the King of Naples, was compelled to leave Rome and escaped to Como with his wife and his son; but, having left that city to seek his fortune, he died while travelling with Christopher Columbus in the year 1493.

Marco Antonio became a noted poet of the school of Martial and was secretary to Cardinal Pompeo Colonna. The satire against Giulio de Medicis which we find in his works having made it necessary for him to leave Rome, he returned to Como, where he married Abondia Rezzonica. The same Giulio de Medicis, having become pope under the name of Clement VII, pardoned him and called him back to Rome with his wife. The city having been taken and ransacked by the Imperialists in 1526, Marco Antonio died there from an attack of the plague; otherwise he would have died of misery, the soldiers of Charles V having taken all he possessed. Pierre Valérien speaks of him in his work *De infelicitate litteratorum*.

Three months after his death, his wife gave birth to Jacques Casanova, who died in France at a great age, colonel in the army commanded by Farnese against Henri, King of Navarre, afterwards King of France. He had left in the city of Parma a son who married Theresa Conti, by whom he had Jacques, who in the year 1681 married Anna Roli. Jacques had two sons, Jean-Baptiste and Gaëtan-Joseph-Jacques. The eldest left Parma in 1712 and was never heard of; the other also went away in 1715, being only nineteen years old.

This is all I have found in my father's diary; from my mother's lips I have heard the following particulars:

Gaëtan-Joseph-Jacques left his family, madly in love with an actress named Fragoletta, who played chambermaids. In his poverty he determined to earn a living by making the most of his own person. At first he gave himself up to dancing and five years afterwards became an actor, making himself conspicuous by his conduct still more than by his talent.

Whether from fickleness or from jealousy, he abandoned La Fragoletta and joined in Venice a troupe of comedians then giving performances at the St. Samuel Theatre. Opposite the house in which he had taken his lodging resided a shoemaker, by name Jerome Farusi, with his wife Marzia and Zanetta, their only daughter—a perfect beauty, sixteen years of age. The young actor fell in love with this girl and succeeded in gaining her affection and obtaining her consent to a runaway match. It was the only way to win her, for, being an actor, he never could have had Marzia's consent, still less Jerome's, as in their eyes a player was a most awful individual. The young lovers, provided with the necessary certificates and accompanied by two witnesses, presented themselves before the Patriarch of Venice, who performed over them the marriage ceremony. Marzia, Zanetta's mother, indulged in a good deal of exclamation, and the father died broken-hearted.

I was born nine months afterward, on the 2nd of April, 1725.

The following year my mother left me under the care of her own mother, who had forgiven her as soon as she had heard that my father had promised never to compel her to appear on the stage. This is a promise which all actors make to the young girls they marry and which they never fulfil, simply because their wives never care much about claiming from them the performance of it. Moreover, it turned out a very fortunate thing for my mother that she had studied for the stage, for nine years later, having been left a widow with six children, she could not have brought them up if it had not been for the resources she found in that profession.

I was only one year old when my father left me to go to London, where he had an engagement. It was in that great city that my mother made her first appearance on the stage, and in that city likewise that she gave birth to my brother François, a celebrated painter of battle-pieces, now residing in Vienna, where he has followed his profession since 1783.

Towards the end of the year 1728 my mother returned to Venice with her husband, and, as she had become an actress, she continued her artistic life. In 1730 she was delivered of my brother Jean, who became Director of the Academy of Painting at Dresden and died there in 1795; during the three following years she became the mother of two daughters, one of whom died at an early age, while the other married in Dresden, where she still lived in 1798. I had also a posthumous brother, who became a priest; he died in Rome fifteen years ago.

Let us now come to the dawn of my existence in the character of a thinking being.

The organ of memory began to develop itself in me at the beginning of August, 1733. I had at that time reached the age of eight years and four months. Of what may have happened to me before that period I have not the faintest recollection. This is the circumstance.

I was standing in the corner of a room, bending towards the wall, supporting my head, and my eyes fixed upon a stream of blood flowing from my nose to the ground. My grandmother, Marzia, whose pet I was, came to me, bathed my face with cold water and, unknown to everyone in the house, took me with her in a gondola as far as Muran, a thickly populated island only half a league distant from Venice.

Alighting from the gondola, we enter a wretched hole, where we find an old woman sitting on a rickety bed, holding a black cat in her arms, with five or six more purring around her. The two old cronies held together a long discourse, of which, most likely, I was the subject. At the end of the dialogue, which was carried on in the *patois* of Forli, the witch, having received a silver ducat from my grandmother, opened a box, took me in her arms, placed me in the box and locked me in it, telling me not to be frightened—a piece of advice which would certainly have had the contrary effect if I had had any wits about me, but I was stupefied. I kept myself quiet in a corner of the box, holding a handkerchief to my nose because it was still bleeding, and otherwise very indifferent to the uproar going on outside. I could hear in turn laughter, weeping, singing, screams, shrieks and knocking against the box, but for all that I cared nought. At last I am taken out of the box; the blood stops flowing. The wonderful old witch, after lavishing caresses upon me, takes off my clothes, lays me on the bed, burns some drugs, gathers the smoke in a sheet which she wraps about me, pronounces incantations, takes the sheet off and gives me five sugar-plums of a very agreeable taste. Then she immediately rubs my temples and the nape of my neck with an ointment exhaling a delightful perfume and puts my clothes on me again. She told me that my hæmorrhage would little by little leave me provided I should never disclose to anyone what she had done to cure me; and she threatened me, on the other hand, with the loss of all my blood and with death, should I ever breathe a word concerning those mysteries. After having thus taught me my lesson, she informed me that a beautiful lady would pay me a visit during the following night and that she would make me happy, on condition that I should have sufficient control over myself never to mention to anyone my having received such a visit. Upon this we left and returned home.

I fell asleep almost as soon as I was in bed, without giving a thought to the beautiful visitor I was to receive; but, waking up a few hours afterwards, I saw, or I fancied I saw, coming down the chimney a dazzling woman, with immense hoops, splendidly attired and wearing on her head a crown set with precious stones, which seemed to me sparkling with fire. With slow steps, but with a majestic and sweet

countenance, she came forward and sat on my bed; then, taking several small boxes from her pocket, she emptied their contents over my head, softly whispering a few words, and, after giving utterance to a long speech, not a single word of which I understood, she kissed me and disappeared the same way as she had come. I soon went again to sleep.

The next morning my grandmother came to dress me, and the moment she was near my bed she cautioned me to be silent, threatening me with death if I dared to say anything respecting my night's adventures. This command, laid upon me by the only woman who had complete authority over me and whose orders I was accustomed to obey blindly, caused me to remember the vision and to store it, with the seal of secrecy, in the inmost corner of my dawning memory. I had not, however, the slightest inclination to mention the circumstance to anyone; in the first place, because I did not suppose it would interest anybody, and in the second place because I would not have known whom to make a confidant of. My disease had rendered me dull and retired, and everybody pitied me and left me to myself; my life was considered likely to be but a short one, and as to my parents, they never spoke to me.

After the journey to Muran and the nocturnal visit of the fairy, I continued to have bleeding at the nose, but less from day to day, and my memory slowly developed. I learned to read in less than a month.

It would be ridiculous, of course, to attribute this cure to such follies, but at the same time I think it would be wrong to assert that they did not in any way contribute to it. As far as the apparition of the beautiful queen is concerned, I have always deemed it to be a dream, unless it should have been some masquerade got up for the occasion, but it is not always in the druggist's shop that are found the best remedies for severe diseases. Our ignorance is every day proved by some wonderful phenomenon, and I believe this to be the reason why it is so difficult to meet with a learned man entirely untainted with superstition. We know, as a matter of course, that there never have been any sorcerers in this world, yet it is true that their power has always existed in the estimation of those to whom crafty knaves have passed themselves off as such.

Somnio nocturno lemures portentaque Thessalia vides.

Many things become real which at first had no existence but in our imagination, and, as a natural consequence, many facts which have been attributed to faith may not always have been miraculous, although they are true miracles for those who lend to faith a boundless power.

The next circumstance of any importance to myself which I recollect happened three months after my trip to Muran and six weeks before my father's death. I give it to my readers only to convey some idea of the manner in which my nature was expanding.

One day about the middle of November, I was with my brother François, two years younger than I, in my father's room, watching him attentively as he was working at optics. A large lump of crystal,

round and cut into facets, attracted my attention. I took it up and, having brought it near my eyes, was delighted to see that it multiplied objects. The wish to possess myself of it at once got hold of me, and, seeing myself unobserved, I took my opportunity and hid it in my pocket.

A few moments after this, my father looked about for his crystal and, unable to find it, concluded that one of us must have taken it. My brother asserted that he had not touched it, and I, although guilty, said the same; but my father, satisfied that he could not be mistaken, threatened to search us and to thrash the one who had told him a story. I pretended to look for the crystal in every corner of the room and, watching my opportunity, slyly slipped it in the pocket of my brother's jacket. At first I was sorry for what I had done, for I might as well have feigned to find the crystal somewhere about the room; but the evil deed was past recall. My father, seeing that we were looking in vain, lost patience, searched us, found the unlucky ball of crystal in the pocket of the innocent boy and inflicted upon him the promised thrashing. Three or four years later I was foolish enough to boast before my brother of the trick I had then played on him; he never forgave me and never failed to take his revenge whenever the opportunity offered.

However, having at a later period gone to confession and accused myself to the priest of that sin with every circumstance surrounding it, I gained some knowledge which afforded me great satisfaction. My confessor, who was a Jesuit, told me that by that deed I had verified the meaning of my first name, Jacques, which, he said, meant in Hebrew "supplanter" and that God had changed for that reason the name of the ancient patriarch into that of Israel, which meant "knowing." He had deceived his brother Esau.

Six weeks after the above adventure, my father was attacked with an abscess in the head, which carried him off in a week. Doctor Zambelli first gave him oppilative remedies and, seeing his mistake, tried to mend it by administering castoreum, which sent his patient into convulsions and killed him. The abscess broke out through the ear one minute after his death, taking its leave after killing him, as if it had no longer any business with him. My father departed this life in the very prime of his manhood. He was only thirty-six years of age, but he was followed to his grave by the regrets of the public and more particularly of all the patricians, amongst whom he was held as above his profession, not less on account of his gentlemanly behaviour than on account of his extensive knowledge in mechanics.

Two days before his death, feeling that his end was at hand, my father expressed a wish to see us all around his bed in the presence of his wife and of the Messieurs Grimani, three Venetian noblemen whose protection he wished to entreat in our favour. After giving us his blessing, he requested our mother, who was drowned in tears, to give her sacred promise that she would not educate any of us for the stage, on which he never would have appeared himself, had he not

been led to it by an unfortunate attachment. My mother gave her promise, and the three noblemen said that they would see to it being faithfully kept. Circumstances helped our mother to fulfil her word.

At that time my mother had been pregnant for six months, and she was allowed to remain away from the stage until after Easter. Beautiful and young as she was, she declined all the offers of marriage which were made to her and, placing her trust in Providence, courageously devoted herself to the task of bringing up her young family.

She considered it a duty to think of me before the others, not so much from a feeling of preference as in consequence of my disease, which had such an effect upon me that it was difficult to know what to do with me. I was very weak, without any appetite, unable to apply myself to anything, and I had all the appearance of an idiot. Physicians disagreed as to the cause of the disease. He loses, they would say, two pounds of blood every week, yet there cannot be more than sixteen or eighteen pounds in his body. What, then, can cause so abundant a bleeding? One asserted that in me all the chyle turned into blood; another was of opinion that the air I was breathing must, at each inhalation, increase the quantity of blood in my lungs, and contended that this was the reason for which I always kept my mouth open. I heard of it all six years afterwards from M. Baffo, a great friend of my late father.

This M. Baffo consulted the celebrated Doctor Macop, of Padua, who sent him his opinion by writing. This consultation, which I have still in my possession, says that our blood is an elastic fluid which is liable to diminish or to increase in thickness, but never in quantity, and that my hæmorrhage could proceed only from the thickness of the mass of my blood, which relieved itself in a natural way in order to facilitate circulation. The doctor added that I would have died long before, had not nature, in its wish for life, assisted itself, and he concluded by stating that the cause of the thickness of my blood could be ascribed only to the air I was breathing, and that consequently I must have a change of air, or every hope of cure be abandoned. He thought likewise that the stupidity so apparent on my countenance was caused by nothing else but the thickness of my blood.

M. Baffo, a man of sublime genius, a most lascivious yet a great and original poet, was therefore instrumental in bringing about the decision which was then taken to send me to Padua, and to him I am indebted for my life. He died twenty years after, the last of his ancient patrician family, but his poems, although obscene, will give everlasting fame to his name. The State Inquisitors of Venice have contributed to his celebrity by their mistaken strictness. Their persecutions caused his manuscript works to become precious. They ought to have been aware that despised things are forgotten.

As soon as the verdict given by Professor Macop had been approved of, the Abbé Grimani undertook to find a good boarding-house in Padua for me, through a chemist of his acquaintance who resided in that city. His name was Ottaviani, and he also was an antiquarian of

some repute. In a few days the boarding-house was found, and on the 2nd of April, 1734, on the very day I had accomplished my ninth year, I was taken to Padua in a *burchiello* along the Brenta Canal. We embarked at ten o'clock in the evening, immediately after supper.

The *burchiello* may be considered a small floating house. There is a large saloon with a smaller cabin at each end and rooms for servants fore and aft. It was a long square with a roof and cut on each side by glazed windows with shutters. The voyage takes eight hours. M. Grimani, M. Baffo and my mother accompanied me. I slept with her in the saloon, and the two friends passed the night in one of the cabins. My mother rose at daybreak, opened one of the windows facing the bed, and the rays of the rising sun, falling on my eyes, caused me to open them. The bed was too low for me to see the land; I could see through the window only the top of the trees along the river. The boat was sailing with such an even movement that I could not realise the fact of our moving, so that the trees, which, one after the other, were rapidly disappearing from my sight, caused me an extreme surprise. "Ah, dear mother!" I exclaimed, "what is this? The trees are walking!" At that very moment the two noblemen came in and, reading astonishment on my countenance, asked me what my thoughts were so busy about. "How is it," I answered, "that the trees are walking?" They all laughed, but my mother, heaving a great sigh, told me, in a tone of deep pity, "The boat is moving, the trees are not. Now dress yourself."

I understood at once the reason of the phenomenon. "Then it may be," said I, "that the sun does not move, and that we, on the contrary, are revolving from west to east." At these words my good mother fairly screamed. M. Grimani pitied my foolishness, and I remained dismayed, grieved and ready to cry. M. Baffo brought me life again. He rushed to me, embraced me tenderly and said, "Thou art right, my child. The sun does not move; take courage, give heed to your reasoning powers and let others laugh."

My mother, greatly surprised, asked him whether he had taken leave of his senses to give me such lessons; but the philosopher, not even condescending to answer her, went on sketching a theory in harmony with my young and simple intelligence. This was the first real pleasure I enjoyed in my life. Had it not been for M. Baffo, this circumstance might have been enough to degrade my understanding; the weakness of credulity would have become part of my mind. The ignorance of the two others would certainly have blunted in me the edge of a faculty which, perhaps, has not carried me very far in my after life, but to which alone I feel that I am indebted for every particle of happiness I enjoy when I look into myself.

We reached Padua at an early hour and went to Ottaviani's house; his wife loaded me with caresses. I found there five or six children, amongst them a girl of eight years, named Marie, and another of seven, Rose, beautiful as a seraph. Ten years later Marie became the wife of the broker Colonda, and Rose, a few years afterwards, married a

nobleman, Pierre Marcello, and had one son and two daughters, one of whom was wedded to M. Pierre Moncenigo, and the other to a nobleman of the Carrero family. This last marriage was afterwards nullified. I shall have, in the course of events, to speak of all these persons, and that is my reason for mentioning their names here.

Ottaviani took us at once to the house where I was to board. It was only a few yards from his own residence, at Ste. Marie d'Avance, in the parish of St. Michel, in the house of an old Sclavonian woman, who let the first floor to Signora Mida, wife of a Sclavonian colonel. My small trunk was laid open before the old woman, to whom was handed an inventory of all its contents, together with six sequins for six months paid in advance. For this small sum she undertook to feed me, to keep me clean, and to send me to a day-school. Protesting that it was not enough, she accepted these terms. I was kissed and strongly commanded to be always obedient and docile, and I was left with her.

In this way did my family get rid of me.

CHAPTER 2

As soon as I was left alone with the Sclavonian woman, she took me up to the garret, where she pointed out my bed in a row with four others, three of which belonged to three young boys of my age, who at that moment were at school, and the fourth to a servant girl, whose province it was to watch us and to prevent the many peccadilloes in which school-boys are wont to indulge. After this visit we came downstairs, and I was taken to the garden with permission to walk about until dinner-time.

I felt neither happy nor unhappy; I had nothing to say. I had neither fear nor hope, nor even a feeling of curiosity; I was neither cheerful nor sad. The only thing which grated upon me was the face of the mistress of the house. Although I had not the faintest idea either of beauty or of ugliness, her face, her countenance, her tone of voice, her language, everything in that woman was repulsive to me. Her masculine features repelled me every time I lifted my eyes towards her face to listen to what she said to me. She was tall and coarse like a trooper; her complexion was yellow, her hair black, her eyebrows long and thick, and her chin gloried in a respectable bristly beard; to complete the picture, her hideous, half-naked bosom was hanging half-way down her long chest; she may have been about fifty. The servant was a stout country girl, who did all the work of the house. The garden was a square of some thirty feet, which had no other beauty than its green appearance.

Towards noon my three companions came back from school, and they at once spoke to me as if we had been old acquaintances, naturally giving me credit for such intelligence as belonged to my age, but which I did not possess. I did not answer them, but they were not baffled, and they at last prevailed upon me to share their innocent

pleasures. I had to run, to carry and be carried, to turn head over heels, and I allowed myself to be initiated into those parts with a pretty good grace until we were summoned to dinner. I sat down to the table; but seeing before me a wooden spoon, I pushed it back, asking for my silver spoon and fork to which I was much attached, because they were a gift from my good old granny. The servant answered that the mistress wished to maintain equality between the boys, and I had to submit, much to my disgust. Having thus learned that equality in everything was the rule of the house, I went to work like the others and began to eat the soup out of the common dish, and if I did not complain of the rapidity with which my companions made it disappear, I could not help wondering at such inequality being allowed. To follow this very poor soup, we had a small portion of dried cod and one apple each, and dinner was over: it was in Lent. We had neither glasses nor cups, and we all helped ourselves out of the same earthen pitcher to a miserable drink called *graspia*, which is made by boiling in water the stems of grapes stripped of their fruit. From the following day I drank nothing but water. This way of living surprised me, for I did not know whether I had a right to complain of it.

After dinner the servant took me to the school, kept by a young priest, Doctor Gozzi, with whom the Sclavonian woman had bargained for my schooling at the rate of forty sous a month, or the eleventh part of a sequin.

The first thing to do was to teach me writing, and I was placed amongst children of five and six years, who did not fail to ridicule me on account of my age.

On my return to the boarding-house I had my supper, which, as a matter of course, was worse than the dinner, and I could not make out why the right of complaint should be denied to me. I was then put to bed, but there were three well known species of vermin to keep me awake all night, besides the rats, which, running all over the garret, jumped on my bed and fairly made my blood run cold with fright. This is the way in which I began to feel misery and to learn how to suffer it patiently. The vermin which feasted upon me lessened my fear of the rats, and by a very lucky system of compensation, the dread of the rats made me less sensitive to the bites of the vermin. My mind was reaping benefit from the very struggle fought between the evils which surrounded me. The servant was perfectly deaf to my screaming.

As soon as it was daylight, I ran out of the wretched garret and, after complaining to the girl of all I had endured during the night, asked her to give me a clean shirt, the one I had on being disgusting to look at, but she answered that I could change my linen only on a Sunday and laughed at me when I threatened to complain to the mistress. For the first time in my life I shed tears of sorrow and of anger when I heard my companions scoffing at me. The poor wretches shared my unhappy condition, but they were used to it, and that makes all the difference.

Sorely depressed, I went to school, but only to sleep soundly through the morning. One of my comrades, in the hope of turning the affair into ridicule at my expense, told the doctor the reason of my being so sleepy. The good priest, however, to whom without doubt Providence had guided me, called me into his private room, listened to all I had to say, saw with his own eyes the proofs of my misery and, moved by the sight of the blisters which disfigured my innocent skin, took up his cloak, went with me to my boarding-house and showed the woman the state I was in. She put on a look of great astonishment and threw all the blame upon the servant. The doctor being curious to see my bed, I was, as much as he was, surprised at the filthy state of the sheets in which I had passed the night. The accursed woman went on blaming the servant and said that she would discharge her; but the girl, happening to be close by and not relishing the accusation, told her boldly that the fault was her own, and she then threw open the beds of my companions to show us that they did not experience any better treatment. The mistress, raving, slapped her on the face, and the servant, to be even with her, returned the compliment and ran away. The doctor left me there, saying that I could not enter his school unless I was sent to him as clean as the other boys. The result for me was a very sharp rebuke, with the threat, as a finishing stroke, that if I ever caused such a broil again, I would be ignominiously turned out of the house.

I could not make it out; I had just entered life and had no knowledge of any other place but the house in which I had been born, in which I had been brought up and in which I had always seen cleanliness and honest comfort. Here I found myself ill-treated, scolded, although it did not seem possible that any blame could be attached to me. At last the old shrew tossed a shirt in my face, and an hour later I saw a new servant changing the sheets, after which we had our dinner.

My schoolmaster took particular care in instructing me. He gave me a seat at his own desk, and, in order to show my proper appreciation of such a favour, I gave myself up to my studies; at the end of the first month I could write so well that I was promoted to the grammar class.

The new life I was leading, the half-starvation system to which I was condemned, and most likely more than everything else the air of Padua, brought me health such as I had never enjoyed before, but that very state of blooming health made it still more difficult for me to bear the hunger which I was compelled to endure; it became unbearable. I was growing rapidly; I enjoyed nine hours of deep sleep, unbroken by any dreams, save that I always fancied myself sitting at a well spread table and gratifying my cruel appetite, but every morning I could realise in full the vanity and the unpleasant disappointment of flattering dreams! This ravenous appetite would at last have weakened me to death, had I not made up my mind to pounce upon and to swallow every kind of eatables I could find, whenever I was certain of not being seen.

Necessity begets ingenuity. I had spied in a cupboard of the kitchen some fifty red herrings; I devoured them all one after the other, as well as all the sausages which were hanging in the chimney to be smoked. In order to accomplish those feats without being detected, I was in the habit of getting up at night and of undertaking my foraging expeditions under the friendly veil of darkness. Every new-laid egg I could discover in the poultry-yard, quite warm and scarcely dropped by the hen, was a most delicious treat. I would even go so far as the kitchen of the schoolmaster, in the hope of pilfering something to eat.

The Slavonian woman, in despair at being unable to catch the thieves, turned away servant after servant. But, in spite of all my expeditions, as I could not always find something to steal, I was as thin as a walking skeleton. •

My progress at school was so rapid during four or five months that the master promoted me to the rank of *dux*. My province was to examine the lessons of my thirty school-fellows, to correct their mistakes and report to the master, with whatever note of blame or of approval I thought they deserved; but my strictness did not last long, for idle boys soon found out the way to enlist my sympathy. When their Latin lesson was full of mistakes, they would buy me off with cutlets and roast chickens; they even gave me money. These proceedings excited my covetousness, or, rather, my gluttony, and, not satisfied with levying a tax upon the ignorant, I became a tyrant and refused well merited approbation to all those who declined paying the contribution I demanded. At last, unable to bear my injustice any longer, the boys accused me, and the master, seeing me convicted of extortion, removed me from my exalted position. I would very likely have fared badly after my dismissal, had not Fate decided to put an end to my cruel apprenticeship.

Doctor Gozzi, who was attached to me, called me privately one day into his study and asked me whether I would feel disposed to carry out the advice he would give me in order to bring about my removal from the house of the Slavonian woman and my admission into his own family. Finding me delighted at such an offer, he caused me to copy three letters, which I sent, one to the Abbé Grimani, another to my friend Baffo and the last to my excellent grandam. The half-year was nearly out, and, my mother not being in Venice at that period, there was no time to lose.

In my letters I gave a description of all my sufferings and prognosticated my death, were I not immediately removed from my boarding-house and placed under the care of my schoolmaster, who was disposed to receive me; but he wanted two sequins a month.

M. Grimani did not answer me and commissioned his friend Ottaviani to scold me for allowing myself to be ensnared by the doctor; but M. Baffo went to consult with my grandmother, who could not write, and in a letter which he addressed to me he informed me that I would soon find myself in a happier situation. And, truly, within a week the

excellent old woman, who loved me until her death, made her appearance as I was sitting down to my dinner. She came in with the mistress of the house, and the moment I saw her, I threw my arms around her neck, crying bitterly, in which luxury the old lady soon joined me. She sat down and took me on her knees; my courage rose again. In the presence of the Slavonian woman I enumerated all my grievances, and, after calling attention to the food, fit only for beggars, which I was compelled to swallow, I took her upstairs to show her my bed. I begged her to take me out and give me a good dinner after six months of such starvation. The boarding-house keeper boldly asserted that she could not afford better for the amount she had received, and there was truth in that, but she had no business to keep house and to become the tormentor of poor children who were thrown on her hands by stinginess and who required to be properly fed.

My grandmother very quietly intimated her intention to take me away forthwith and asked her to put all my things in my trunk. I cannot express my joy during these preparations. For the first time I felt that kind of happiness which makes forgiveness compulsory upon the being who enjoys it, and causes him to forget all previous unpleasantness. My grandmother took me to the inn, and dinner was served, but she could hardly eat anything in her astonishment at the voracity with which I was swallowing my food. In the meantime Doctor Gozzi, to whom she had sent notice of her arrival, came in, and his appearance soon prepossessed her in his favour. He was then a fine-looking priest, twenty-six years of age, chubby, modest and respectful. In less than a quarter of an hour everything was satisfactorily arranged between them. The good old lady counted out twenty-four sequins for one year of my schooling and took a receipt for the same, but she kept me with her for three days in order to have me clothed like a priest and to get me a wig, as the filthy state of my hair made it necessary to have it all cut off.

At the end of the three days she took me to the doctor's house, so as to see herself to my installation and to recommend me to the doctor's mother, who desired her to send or to buy in Padua a bedstead and bedding; but the doctor having remarked that, his own bed being very wide, I might sleep with him, my grandmother expressed her gratitude for all his kindness, and we accompanied her as far as the *burchiello* she had engaged to return to Venice.

The family of Doctor Gozzi was composed of his mother (who had great reverence for him because, a peasant by birth, she did not think herself worthy of having a son who was a priest and, still more, a doctor of divinity; she was plain, old and cross) and of his father, a shoemaker by trade, working all day long and never addressing a word to anyone, not even during the meals. He became a sociable being only on holidays, on which occasions he would spend his time with his friends in some tavern, coming home at midnight as drunk as a lord and singing verses from *Tasso*. When in this blissful state, the good man could not make up his mind to go to bed and became

violent if anyone attempted to compel him to lie down. Wine alone gave him sense and spirit, for when sober he was incapable of attending to the simplest family matter, and his wife often said that he never would have married her, had not his friends taken care to give him a good breakfast before he went to the church.

But Doctor Gozzi had also a sister, called Bettina, who at the age of thirteen was pretty, lively and a great reader of romances. Her father and mother scolded her constantly because she was too often looking out of the window, and the doctor did the same on account of her love for reading. This girl took at once my fancy without my knowing why and little by little kindled in my heart the first spark of a passion which, afterwards, became in me the ruling one.

Six months after I had become an inmate in the house, the doctor found himself without scholars; they all went away because I had become the sole object of his affection. He then determined to establish a college and to receive young boys as boarders; but two years passed before he met with any success. During that period he taught me everything he knew. True, it was not much; yet it was enough to open to me the high road to all sciences. He likewise taught me the violin, an accomplishment which proved very useful to me in a peculiar circumstance, the particulars of which I will give in good time. The excellent doctor, who was in no way a philosopher, made me study the logic of Peripatetics and the cosmography of the ancient system of Ptolemy, at which I would laugh, teasing the poor doctor with theorems to which he could find no answer. His habits were irreproachable, and in all things connected with religion, although no bigot, he was of the greatest strictness, and, admitting everything as an article of faith, nothing appeared difficult to his conception. He believed the deluge to have been universal, and he thought that, before that great cataclysm, men lived a thousand years and conversed with God, that Noah took one hundred years to build the ark and that the earth, suspended in the air, is firmly held in the very centre of the universe, which God had created from nothing. When I would say and prove that it was absurd to believe in the existence of nothingness, he would stop me short and call me a fool.

He could enjoy a good bed, a glass of wine and cheerfulness at home. He did not admire fine wits, good jests or criticism, because it easily turns to slander, and he would laugh at the folly of men reading newspapers, which, in his opinion, always lied and constantly repeated the same things. He asserted that nothing was more troublesome than incertitude, and therefore he condemned thought because it gives birth to doubt.

His ruling passion was preaching, for which his face and his voice qualified him; his congregation was almost entirely composed of women, of whom, however, he was the sworn enemy; so much so that he would not look them in the face even when he spoke to them. Weakness of the flesh and fornication appeared to him the most monstrous of sins, and he would be very angry if I dared to assert that, in my esti-

mation, they were the most venial of faults. His sermons were crammed with passages from the Greek authors, which he translated into Latin. One day I ventured to remark that those passages ought to be translated into Italian, because women did not understand Latin any more than Greek, but he took offence, and I never had afterwards the courage to allude any more to the matter. Moreover he praised me to his friends as a wonder because I had learned to read Greek alone, without any assistance but a grammar.

During Lent, in the year 1736, my mother wrote to the doctor; and, as she was on the point of her departure for St. Petersburg, she wished to see me and requested him to accompany me to Venice for three or four days. This invitation set him thinking, for he had never seen Venice, never frequented good company, and yet he did not wish to appear a novice in anything. We were soon ready to leave Padua, and all the family escorted us to the *burchiello*.

My mother received the doctor with almost friendly welcome; but she was strikingly beautiful, and my poor master felt very uncomfortable, not daring to look her in the face and yet called upon to converse with her. She saw the dilemma he was in and thought she would have some amusing sport about it, should opportunity present itself, I, in the meantime, drew the attention of everyone in her circle; everybody had known me as a fool and was amazed at my improvement in the short space of two years. The doctor was overjoyed because he saw that the full credit of my transformation was given to him.

The first thing which struck my mother unpleasantly was my light-coloured wig, which was not in harmony with my dark complexion and contrasted most woefully with my black eyes and eyebrows. She inquired from the doctor why I did not wear my own hair, and he answered that, with a wig, it was easier for his sister to keep me clean. Everyone smiled at the simplicity of the answer, but the merriment increased when, to the question made by my mother whether his sister was married, I took the answer upon myself and said that Bettina was the prettiest girl of Padua, and was only fourteen years of age. My mother promised the doctor a splendid present for his sister on condition that she would let me wear my own hair, and he promised that her wishes would be complied with. The peruke-maker was then called, and I had a wig which matched my complexion.

Soon afterwards all the guests began to play cards, with the exception of my master, and I went to see my brothers in my grandmother's room. François showed me some architectural designs which I pretended to admire; Jean had nothing to show me, and I thought him a rather insignificant boy. The others were still very young.

At the supper-table the doctor, seated next to my mother, was very awkward. He would very likely not have said one word, had not an Englishman, a writer of talent, addressed him in Latin; but the doctor, being unable to make him out, modestly answered that he did not understand English, which caused much hilarity. M. Baffo, however, explained the puzzle by telling us that Englishmen read and

pronounced Latin in the same way that they read and spoke their own language, and I remarked that Englishmen were wrong as much as we would be if we pretended to read and to pronounce their language according to Latin rules. The Englishman, pleased with my reasoning, wrote down the following old couplet and gave it to me to read:

*Dicite, grammatici, cur mascula nomina cunnus,
Et cur femineum mentula nomen habet.*

After reading it aloud, I exclaimed, "This is Latin, indeed."

"We know that," said my mother, "but can you explain it?"

"To explain it is not enough," I answered. "It is a question which is worthy of an answer." And after considering for a moment, I wrote the following pentameter:

Disce quod a domino nomina servus habet.

This was my first literary exploit, and I may say that in that very instant the seed of my love for literary fame was sown in my breast, for the applause lavished upon me exalted me to the very pinnacle of happiness. The Englishman, quite amazed at my answer, said that no boy of eleven years had ever accomplished such a feat, embraced me repeatedly and presented me with his watch. My mother, inquisitive like a woman, asked M. Grimani to tell her the meaning of the lines, but, as the abbé was not any wiser than she was, M. Baffo translated it in a whisper. Surprised at my knowledge, she rose from her chair to get a valuable gold watch and presented it to my master, who, not knowing how to express his deep gratitude, treated us to the most comic scene. My mother, in order to save him from the difficulty of paying her a compliment, offered him her cheek. He had only to give her a couple of kisses, the easiest and the most innocent thing in good company; but the poor man was on burning coals and so completely out of countenance that he would, I truly believe, rather have died than give the kisses. He drew back with his head down, and he was allowed to remain in peace until we retired for the night.

When we found ourselves alone in our room, he poured out his heart and exclaimed that it was a pity he could not publish in Padua the distich and my answer.

"And why not," I said.

"Because both are obscene."

"But they are sublime."

"Let us go to bed and speak no more on the subject. Your answer was wonderful, because you cannot possibly know anything of the subject in question, or of the manner in which verses ought to be written."

As far as the subject was concerned, I knew it by theory; for, unknown to the doctor and because he had forbidden it, I had read *Meursius*, but it was natural that he should be amazed at my being able to write verses, when he, who had taught me prosody, never

could compose a single line. *Nemo dat quod non habet* is a false axiom when applied to mental acquirements.

Four days afterwards, as we were preparing for our departure, my mother gave me a parcel for Bettina, and M. Grimani presented me with four sequins to buy books. A week later my mother left for St. Petersburg.

After our return to Padua, my good master for three or four months never ceased to speak of my mother, and Bettina, having found in the parcel five yards of black silk and twelve pairs of gloves, became singularly attached to me and took such good care of my hair that in less than six months I was able to give up wearing the wig. She used to comb my hair every morning, often before I was out of bed, saying that she had not time to wait until I was dressed. She washed my face, my neck, my chest, lavishing on me childish caresses which I thought innocent, but which caused me to be angry with myself because I felt that they excited me. Three years younger than she was, it seemed to me that she could not love me with any idea of mischief, and the consciousness of my own vicious excitement put me out of temper with myself. When, seated on my bed, she would say that I was getting stouter, she caused me the most intense emotion; but I said nothing, for fear she would remark my sensitiveness; and, when she would go on saying that my skin was soft, I would draw back, angry with myself that I did not dare to do the same to her, but delighted at her not guessing how I longed to do it. When I was dressed, she often gave me the sweetest kisses, calling me her darling child, but whatever wish I had to follow her example, I was not yet bold enough. After some time, however, Bettina laughed at my timidity; I became more daring and returned her kisses with interest, but I always gave way the moment I felt a wish to go further; I then would turn my head, pretending to look for something, and she would go away. She was scarcely out of the room before I was in despair at not having followed the inclination of my nature; and, astonished at the fact that Bettina could do to me all she was in the habit of doing without feeling any excitement from it, while I could hardly refrain from pushing my attacks further, I would every day determine to change my way of acting.

In the early part of autumn the doctor received three new boarders, and one of them, who was fifteen years old, appeared to me in less than a month on very friendly terms with Bettina.

This circumstance caused me a feeling of which until then I had no idea and which I did not analyse until a few years afterwards. It was neither jealousy nor indignation, but a noble contempt which I thought ought not to be repressed, because Cordiani, an ignorant, coarse boy, without talent or polite education, the son of a simple farmer and incapable of competing with me in anything, having over me but the advantage of dawning manhood, did not appear to me a fit person to be preferred to me; my young self-esteem whispered that I was above him. I began to nurse a feeling of pride mixed with con-

tempt which told against Bettina, whom I loved unknown to myself. She soon guessed it from the way I would receive her caresses when she came to comb my hair while I was in bed; I would repulse her hands and no longer return her kisses. One day, vexed at my answering her question as to the reason of my change towards her by stating that I had no cause for it, she told me in a tone of commiseration that I was jealous of Cordiani. This reproach sounded to me like a debasing slander. I answered that Cordiani was, in my estimation, as worthy of her as she was worthy of him. She went away smiling, but, revolving in her mind the only way by which she could be revenged, she thought herself bound to render me jealous. However, as she could not attain such an end without making me fall in love with her, this is the policy she adopted.

One morning she came to me as I was in bed and brought me a pair of white stockings of her own knitting. After dressing my hair, she asked my permission to try the stockings on me herself, in order to correct any deficiency in the other pairs she intended to knit for me. The doctor had gone out to say his mass. As she was putting on the stockings, she remarked that my legs were not clean and, without more ado, immediately began to wash them. I would have been ashamed to let her see my bashfulness; I let her do as she liked, not foreseeing what would happen. Seated on my bed, she carried too far her love of cleanliness and did not stop until it could be carried no further. Having recovered my calm, I bethought myself that I was guilty and begged her forgiveness. She did not expect this and, after considering for a few moments, told me kindly that the fault was entirely her own, but that she never would again be guilty of it. And she went out of the room, leaving me to my own thoughts.

They were of a cruel character. It seemed to me that I had brought dishonour upon Bettina, that I had betrayed the confidence of her family, offended against the sacred laws of hospitality, that I was guilty of a most wicked crime, which I could atone for only by marrying her, in case Bettina could make up her mind to accept for her husband a wretch unworthy of her.

These thoughts led to a deep melancholy which went on increasing from day to day, Bettina having entirely ceased her morning visits by my bedside. During the first week I could easily account for the girl's reserve, and my sadness would soon have taken the character of the warmest love, had not her manner towards Cordiani inoculated in my veins the poison of jealousy, although I never dreamed of accusing her of the same crime towards him that she had committed upon me.

I felt convinced, after due consideration, that the act she had been guilty of with me had been deliberately done and that her feelings of repentance kept her away from me. This conviction was rather flattering to my vanity, as it gave me the hope of being loved, and the end of all my communings was that I made up my mind to write her and thus to give her courage.

I composed a letter, short but calculated to restore peace to her mind,

whether she thought herself guilty or suspected me of feelings contrary to those which her dignity might expect from me. My letter was, in my own estimation, a perfect masterpiece and just the kind of epistle by which I was certain to conquer her very adoration and sink forever the sun of Cordiani, whom I could not accept as the sort of being likely to make her hesitate for one instant in her choice between him and me. Half an hour after the receipt of my letter she told me herself that the next morning she would pay me her usual visit, but I waited in vain. This conduct provoked me almost to madness, but my surprise was indeed great when, at the breakfast table, she asked me whether I would let her dress me up as a girl to accompany her five or six days later to a ball for which a neighbour of ours, Doctor Olivo, had sent letters of invitation. Everybody having seconded the motion, I gave my consent. I thought this arrangement would afford a favourable opportunity for an explanation, for mutual vindication, and would open a door for the most complete reconciliation, without fear of any surprise arising from the proverbial weakness of the flesh. But a most unexpected circumstance prevented our attending the ball and brought forth a comedy with a truly tragic turn.

Doctor Gozzi's godfather, a man advanced in age and in easy circumstances, residing in the country, thought himself, after a severe illness, very near his end and sent to the doctor a carriage with a request to come to him at once with his father, as he wished them to be present at his death and to pray for his departing soul. The old shoemaker drained a bottle, donned his Sunday clothes and went off with his son.

I thought this a favourable opportunity and determined to improve it, considering that the night of the ball was too remote to suit my impatience. I therefore managed to tell Bettina that I would leave ajar the door of my room and that I would expect her as soon as everyone in the house had gone to bed. She promised to come. She slept on the ground floor in a small closet, divided only by a partition from her father's chamber; the doctor being away, I was alone in the large room. The three boarders had their apartment in a different part of the house, and I had therefore no mishap to fear. I was delighted at the idea that I had at last reached the moment so ardently desired.

The instant I was in my room, I bolted my door and opened the one leading to the passage, so that Bettina should have only to push it in order to come in; I then put my light out, but did not undress.

When we read of such situations in a romance, we think they are exaggerated; they are not so, and the passage in which Ariosto represents Roger waiting for Alcine is a beautiful picture painted from nature.

Until midnight I waited without feeling much anxiety; but I heard the clock strike two, three, four o'clock in the morning without seeing Bettina; my blood began to boil, and I was soon in a state of furious rage. It was snowing hard, but I shook from passion more than from cold. One hour before daybreak, unable to master any longer my impatience, I made up my mind to go downstairs with bare feet, so as

not to wake the dog, and to place myself at the bottom of the stairs within a yard of Bettina's door, which ought to have been opened if she had gone out of her room. I reached the door; it was closed, and, as it could be locked only from inside, I imagined that Bettina had fallen asleep. I was on the point of knocking at the door, but was prevented by fear of rousing the dog, as from that door to that of her closet there was a distance of three or four yards. Overwhelmed with grief and unable to make a decision, I sat down on the last step of the stairs; but at daybreak, chilled, benumbed, shivering with cold, afraid that the servant would see me and would think I was mad, I determined to go back to my room. I arise, but at that very moment I hear some noise in Bettina's room. Certain that I am going to see her, and hope lending me new strength, I draw nearer to the door. It opens; but, instead of Bettina coming out, I see Cordiani, who gives me such a furious kick in the stomach that I am thrown at a distance deep in the snow. Without stopping a single instant, Cordiani is off and locks himself up in the room which he shared with the brothers Feltrini.

I pick myself up quickly, with the intention of taking my revenge upon Bettina, whom nothing could have saved from the effects of my rage at that moment. But I find her door locked; I kick vigorously against it, the dog starts a loud barking, and I make a hurried retreat to my room, in which I lock myself up, throwing myself in bed to compose and heal up mind and body, for I was half-dead.

Deceived, humbled, ill-treated, an object of contempt to the happy and triumphant Cordiani, I spent three hours ruminating the darkest schemes of revenge. To poison them both seemed to me but a trifle in that terrible moment of bitter misery. This project gave way to another as extravagant, as cowardly—namely, to go at once to her brother and disclose everything to him. I was twelve years of age, and my mind had not yet acquired sufficient coolness to mature schemes of heroic revenge, which are produced by false feelings of honour; this was only my apprenticeship in such adventures.

I was in that state of mind, when suddenly I heard outside my door the gruff voice of Bettina's mother, who begged me to come down, adding that her daughter was dying. As I would have been very sorry if she had departed this life before she could feel the effects of my revenge, I got up hurriedly and went downstairs. I found Bettina lying in her father's bed, writhing with fearful convulsions and surrounded by the whole family. Half dressed, nearly bent double, she was throwing her body now to the right, now to the left, striking at random with her feet and with her fists and extricating herself by violent shaking from the hands of those who endeavoured to keep her down.

With this sight before me and the night's adventure still in my mind, I hardly knew what to think. I had no knowledge of human nature, no knowledge of artifice and tricks, and I could not understand how I found myself coolly witnessing such a scene and com-

posedly calm in the presence of two beings, one of whom I intended to kill and the other to dishonour. At the end of an hour Bettina fell asleep.

A nurse and Doctor Olivo came soon after. The first said that the convulsions were caused by hysterics, but the doctor said "no," and prescribed rest and cold baths. I said nothing, but I could not refrain from laughing at them, for I knew—or, rather, guessed—that Bettina's sickness was the result of her nocturnal employment, or of the fright which she must have felt at my meeting with Cordiani. At all events, I determined to postpone my revenge until the return of her brother, although I had not the slightest suspicion that her illness was all sham, for I did not give her credit for so much cleverness.

To return to my room I had to pass through Bettina's closet, and, seeing her dress handy on the bed, I took it into my head to search her pockets. I found a small note and, recognising Cordiani's handwriting, took possession of it, to read it in my room. I marvelled at the girl's imprudence, for her mother might have discovered it and, being unable to read, would very likely have given it to the doctor, her son. I thought Bettina must have taken leave of her senses, but my feelings may be appreciated when I read the following words: "As your father is away, it is not necessary to leave your door ajar as usual. When we leave the supper-table I will go to your closet; you will find me there."

When I recovered from my stupor, I gave way to an irresistible fit of laughter, and, seeing how completely I had been duped, I thought I was cured of my love. Cordiani appeared to me deserving of forgiveness and Bettina of contempt. I congratulated myself upon having received a lesson of such importance for the remainder of my life. I even went so far as to acknowledge to myself that Bettina had been quite right in giving the preference to Cordiani, who was fifteen years old, while I was only a child. Yet, in spite of my good disposition to forgiveness, the kick administered by Cordiani was still heavy upon my memory, and I could not help keeping a grudge against him.

At noon, as we were at dinner in the kitchen, where we took our meals on account of the cold weather, Bettina began again to raise piercing screams. Everybody rushed to her room, but I quietly kept my seat and finished my dinner, after which I went to my studies. In the evening, when I came down to supper, I found that Bettina's bed had been brought to the kitchen, close by her mother's; but it was no concern of mine, and I remained likewise perfectly indifferent to the noise made during the night and to the confusion which took place in the morning, when she had a fresh fit of convulsions.

Doctor Gozzi and his father returned in the evening. Cordiani, who felt uneasy, came to inquire from me what my intentions were, but I rushed towards him with an open penknife in my hand, and he beat a hasty retreat. I had entirely abandoned the idea of relating the night's scandalous adventure to the doctor, for such a project I could entertain only in a moment of excitement and rage. The next day

the mother came in while we were at our lesson and told the doctor, after a lengthened preamble, that she had discovered the character of her daughter's illness; that it was caused by a spell thrown over her by a witch and that she knew the witch well.

"It may be, my dear mother, but we must be careful not to make a mistake. Who is the witch?"

"Our old servant, and I have just had a proof of it."

"How so?"

"I have barred the door of my room with two broomsticks placed in the shape of a cross, which she would have had to undo to go in; but, when she saw them, she drew back and went round by the other door. It is obvious that, were she not a witch, she would not be afraid of touching them."

"It is not complete evidence, dear mother; send the woman to me." The servant made her appearance.

"Why," said the doctor, "did you not enter my mother's room this morning through the usual door?"

"I do not know what you mean."

"Did you not see St. Andrew's cross on the door?"

"What cross is that?"

"It is useless to plead ignorance," said the mother. "Where did you sleep last Thursday night?"

"At my niece's, who had just been confined."

"Nothing of the sort. You were at the witches' Sabbath; you are a witch and have bewitched my daughter."

The poor woman, indignant at such an accusation, spits at her mistress's face; the mistress, enraged, gets hold of a stick to give the servant a drubbing; the doctor endeavours to keep his mother back, but is compelled to let her loose and to run after the servant, who was hurrying down the stairs, screaming and howling in order to rouse the neighbours; he catches her and finally succeeds in pacifying her with some money.

After this comical but rather scandalous exhibition, the doctor donned his vestments for the purpose of exorcising his sister and of ascertaining whether she was truly possessed of an unclean spirit. The novelty of this mystery attracted the whole of my attention. All the inmates of the house appeared to me either mad or stupid, for I could not for the life of me imagine that diabolical spirits were dwelling in Bettina's body. When we drew near her bed, her breathing had, to all appearance, stopped, and exorcisms of her brother did not restore it. Doctor Olivo happened to come in at that moment and inquired whether he would be in the way; he was answered in the negative, provided he had faith. Upon which he left, saying that he had no faith in any miracles except in those of the Gospel.

Soon after Doctor Gozzi went to his room, and, finding myself alone with Bettina, I bent down over her bed and whispered in her ear, "Take courage, get well again and rely upon my discretion."

She turned her head towards the wall and did not answer me, but

the day passed off without any more convulsions. I thought I had cured her, but on the following day the frenzy went up to the brain, and in her delirium she pronounced at random Greek and Latin words without any meaning, and then no doubt whatever was entertained of her being possessed of the evil spirit. Her mother went out and returned soon, accompanied by the most renowned exorcist of Padua, a very ill-featured Capuchin, called Friar Prospero da Bovolenta.

The moment Bettina saw the exorcist, she burst into loud laughter and addressed to him the most offensive insults, which fairly delighted everybody, as the devil alone could be bold enough to address a Capuchin in such a manner; but the holy man, hearing himself called an obtrusive ignoramus and a stinkard, went on striking Bettina with a heavy crucifix, saying that he was beating the devil. He stopped only when he saw her on the point of hurling at him the chamber utensil which she had just seized. "If it is the devil who has offended thee with his words," she said, "resent the insult with words likewise, jackass that thou art; but, if I have offended thee myself, learn, stupid booby, that thou must respect me and be off at once."

I could see poor Doctor Gozzi blushing; the friar, however, held his ground and, armed at all points, began to read a terrible exorcism. at the end of which he commanded the devil to state his name.

"My name is Bettina."

"It cannot be, for it is the name of a baptised girl."

"Then thou art of opinion that a devil must rejoice in a masculine name? Learn, ignorant friar, that a devil is a spirit and does not belong to either sex. But as thou believest that a devil is speaking to thee through my lips, promise to answer me with truth, and I will engage to give way before thy incantations."

"Very well, I agree to this."

"Tell me, then, art thou thinking that thy knowledge is greater than mine?"

"No, but I believe myself more powerful in the name of the Holy Trinity and by my sacred character."

"If thou art more powerful than I, then prevent me from telling thee unpalatable truths. Thou art very vain of thy beard, thou art combing and dressing it ten times a day and wouldst not shave half of it to get me out of this body. Cut off thy beard, and I promise to come out."

"Father of lies, I will increase thy punishment a hundred fold."

"I dare thee to do it."

After saying these words, Bettina broke into such a loud peal of laughter that I could not refrain from joining in it. The Capuchin, turning towards Doctor Gozzi, told him that I was wanting in faith and that I ought to leave the room; which I did, remarking that he had guessed rightly. I was not yet out of the room when the friar offered his hand to Bettina for her to kiss, and I had the pleasure of seeing her spit upon it.

This strange girl, full of extraordinary talent, made rare sport of the friar, without causing any surprise to anyone, as all her answers were

attributed to the devil. I could not conceive what her purpose was in playing such a part.

The Capuchin dined with us, and during the meal he uttered a good deal of nonsense. After dinner, he returned to Bettina's chamber, with the intention of blessing her, but, as soon as she caught sight of him, she took up a glass full of some black mixture sent from the apothecary and threw it at his head. Cordiani, being close by the friar, came in for a good share of the liquid—an accident which afforded me the greatest delight. Bettina was quite right to improve her opportunity, as everything she did was, of course, put to the account of the unfortunate devil. Not overmuch pleased, Friar Prospero, as he left the house, told the doctor that there was no doubt of the girl being possessed, but that another exorcist must be sent for, since he had not, himself, obtained God's grace to eject the evil spirit.

After he had gone, Bettina kept very calm for six hours and in the evening, to our great surprise, joined us at the supper table. She told her parents that she felt quite well, spoke to her brother and then, addressing me, remarked that, the ball taking place on the morrow, she would come to my room in the morning to dress my hair like a girl's. I thanked her and said that, as she had been so ill, she ought to nurse herself. She soon retired to bed, and we remained at the table, talking of her.

When I was undressing for the night, I took up my night-cap and found in it a small note with these words: "You must accompany me to the ball, disguised as a girl, or I will give you a sight which will cause you to weep."

I waited until the doctor was asleep and wrote the following answer: "I cannot go to the ball because I have fully made up my mind to avoid every opportunity of being alone with you. As for the painful sight with which you threaten to entertain me, I believe you capable of keeping your word, but I entreat you to spare my heart, for I love you as if you were my sister. I have forgiven you, dear Bettina, and I wish to forget everything. I enclose a note which you must be delighted to have again in your possession. You see what risk you were running when you left it in your pocket. This restitution must convince you of my friendship."

CHAPTER 3

BETTINA must have been in despair, not knowing into whose hands her letter had fallen; to return it to her and thus to allay her anxiety was, therefore, a great proof of friendship; but my generosity, at the same time that it freed her from a keen sorrow, must have caused her another quite as dreadful, for she knew that I was master of her secret. Cordiani's letter was perfectly explicit; it gave the strongest evidence that she was in the habit of receiving him every night, and therefore the story she had prepared to deceive me was useless. I felt

it was so and, being disposed to calm her anxiety as far as I could, went to her bedside in the morning and placed in her hands Cordiani's note and my answer to her letter.

The girl's spirit and talent had won my esteem; I could no longer despise her; I saw in her only a poor creature seduced by her natural temperament. She loved man and was to be pitied only on account of the consequences. Believing that the view I took of the situation was a right one, I had resigned myself like a reasonable being and not like a disappointed lover. The shame was for her and not for me. I had only one wish, namely, to find out whether the two Feltrini brothers, Cordiani's companions, had likewise shared Bettina's favours.

Bettina put on throughout the day a cheerful and happy look. In the evening she dressed for the ball; but suddenly an attack of sickness, whether feigned or real I did not know, compelled her to go to bed and frightened everybody in the house. As for myself, knowing the whole affair, I was prepared for new scenes and, indeed, for sad ones, for I felt that I had obtained over her a power repugnant to her vanity and self-love. I must, however, confess that, in spite of the excellent school in which I found myself before I had attained manhood and which ought to have given me experience as a shield for the future, I have through the whole of my life been the dupe of women. Twelve years ago, if it had not been for my guardian angel, I would have foolishly married a young, thoughtless girl, with whom I had fallen in love. Now that I am seventy-two years old, I believe myself no longer susceptible of such follies—but, alas! that is the very thing which causes me to be miserable.

The next day the whole family was deeply grieved because the devil of whom Bettina was possessed had made himself master of her reason. Doctor Gozzi told me that there could not be the shadow of a doubt that his unfortunate sister was possessed, as, if she had been only mad, she never would have so cruelly ill-treated the Capuchin, Prospero, and he determined to place her under the care of Father Mancia.

This Mancia was a celebrated Jacobin (or Dominican) exorcist, who enjoyed the reputation of never having failed to cure a girl possessed of the demon.

Sunday had come; Bettina had made a good dinner, but she had been frantic all through the day. Towards midnight her father came home, singing Tasso as usual, and so drunk that he could not stand. He went up to Bettina's bed and, after kissing her affectionately, said to her, "Thou art not mad, my girl."

Her answer was that he was not drunk.

"Thou art possessed of the devil, my dear child."

"Yes, father, and you alone can cure me."

"Well, I am ready."

Upon this our shoemaker begins a theological discourse, expatiating upon the power of faith and upon the virtue of the paternal blessing. He throws off his cloak, takes a crucifix with one hand, places the

other over the head of his daughter and addresses the devil in such an amusing way that even his wife, always a stupid, dull, cross-grained old woman, had to laugh till the tears came down her cheeks. The two performers in the comedy alone were not laughing, and their serious countenance added to the fun of the performance. I marvelled at Bettina (who was always ready to enjoy a good laugh) having sufficient control over herself to remain calm and grave. Doctor Gozzi had also given way to merriment, but begged that the farce should come to an end, for he deemed that his father's eccentricities were as many profanations against the sacredness of exorcism. At last the exorcist, doubtless tired out, went to bed, saying that he was certain that the devil would not disturb his daughter during the night.

On the morrow, just as we had finished our breakfast, Father Mancia made his appearance.* Doctor Gozzi, followed by the whole family, escorted him to his sister's bedside. As for me, I was entirely taken up by the face of the monk. Here is his portrait. His figure was tall and majestic, his age about thirty; he had light hair and blue eyes; his features were those of Apollo, but without the latter's pride and assuming haughtiness; his complexion, dazzling white, was pale, but that paleness seemed to have been given for the very purpose of showing off the red coral of his lips, through which could be seen, when they opened, two rows of pearls. He was neither thin nor stout, and the habitual sadness of his countenance enhanced its sweetness. His gait was slow, his air timid, an indication of the great modesty of his mind.

When we entered the room, Bettina was asleep, or pretended to be so. Father Mancia took a sprinkler and threw over her a few drops of holy water; she opened her eyes, looked at the monk and closed them immediately; a little while after she opened them again, had a better look at him, laid herself on her back, let her arms droop down gently and, with her head prettily bent on one side, fell into the sweetest of slumbers.

The exorcist, standing by the bed, took out of his pocket his ritual and the stole, which he put round his neck, then a reliquary, which he placed on the bosom of the sleeping girl, and, with the air of a saint, begged all of us to fall on our knees and pray, so that God should let him know whether the patient was possessed or only labouring under a natural disease. He kept us kneeling for half an hour, reading all the time in a low tone of voice. Bettina did not stir.

Tired, I suppose, of the performance, he desired to speak privately with Doctor Gozzi. They passed into the next room, out of which they emerged after a quarter of an hour, brought back by a loud peal of laughter from the mad girl, who, when she saw them, turned her back on them. Father Mancia smiled, dipped the sprinkler over and over in the holy water, gave us all a generous shower and took his leave.

Doctor Gozzi told us that the exorcist would come again on the morrow and that he had promised to deliver Bettina within three hours if she were truly possessed of the demon, but that he made no

promise if it should turn out to be a case of madness. The mother exclaimed that he would surely deliver her, and she poured out her thanks to God for having allowed her the grace of beholding a saint before her death.

The following day Bettina was in a fine frenzy. She began to utter the most extravagant speeches that a poet could imagine and did not stop when the charming exorcist came into her room; he seemed to enjoy her foolish talk for a few minutes, after which, having armed himself *cap-à-pie*, he begged us to withdraw. His order was obeyed instantly; we left the chamber, and the door remained open. But what did it matter? Who would have been bold enough to go in?

During three long hours we heard nothing; the stillness was unbroken. At noon the monk called us in. Bettina was there sad and very quiet while the exorcist packed up his things. He took his departure, saying he had very good hopes of the case and requesting that the doctor would send him news of the patient. Bettina partook of dinner in her bed, got up for supper and the next day behaved herself rationally; but the following circumstance strengthened my opinion that she had been neither insane nor possessed.

It was two days before the Purification of the Holy Virgin. Doctor Gozzi was in the habit of giving us the sacrament in his own church, but he always sent us for our confession to the church of St. Augustin, in which the Jacobins of Padua officiated. At the supper table he told us to prepare ourselves for the next day, and his mother, addressing us, said, "You ought, all of you, to confess to Father Mancia, so as to obtain absolution from that holy man. I intend to go to him myself." Cordiani and the two Feltrini agreed to the proposal; I remained silent, but, as the idea was unpleasant to me, I concealed the feeling, with a full determination to prevent the execution of the project.

I had entire confidence in the secrecy of confession, and I was incapable of making a false one, but, knowing that I had a right to choose my confessor, I most certainly never would have been so simple as to confess to Father Mancia what had taken place between me and a girl, because he would have easily guessed that the girl could be no other but Bettina. Besides, I was satisfied that Cordiani would confess everything to the monk, and I was deeply sorry.

Early the next morning, Bettina brought me a band for my neck and gave me the following letter: "Spurn me, but respect my honour and the shadow of peace to which I aspire. No one from this house must confess to Father Mancia; you alone can prevent the execution of that project, and I need not suggest the way to succeed. It will prove whether you have some friendship for me."

I could not express the pity I felt for the poor girl as I read that note. In spite of that feeling, this is what I answered: "I can well understand that, notwithstanding the inviolability of confession, your mother's proposal should cause you great anxiety; but I cannot see why, in order to prevent its execution, you should depend upon me rather than upon Cordiani who has expressed his acceptance of it. All

I can promise you is that I will not be one of those who may go to Father Mancia; but I have no influence over your lover; you alone can speak to him."

She replied: "I have never addressed a word to Cordiani since the fatal night which has sealed my misery, and I never will speak to him again, even if I could by so doing recover my lost happiness. To you alone I wish to be indebted for my life and for my honour."

This girl appeared to me more wonderful than all the heroines of whom I had read in novels. It seemed to me that she was making sport of me with the most barefaced effrontery. I thought she was trying to fetter me again with her chains; and, although I had no inclination for them, I made up my mind to render her the service she claimed at my hands and which she believed I alone could compass. She felt certain of success, but in what school had she obtained her experience of the human heart? Was it in reading novels? Most likely the reading of a certain class of novels causes the ruin of a great many young girls, but I am of opinion that from good romances they acquire graceful manners and a knowledge of society.

Having made up my mind to show her every kindness in my power, I took an opportunity, as we were undressing for the night, of telling Doctor Gozzi that, for conscientious motives, I could not confess to Father Mancia, and yet that I did not wish to be an exception in that matter. He kindly answered that he understood my reasons, and that he would take us all to the church of St. Antoine. I kissed his hand in token of my gratitude.

On the following day, everything having gone according to her wishes, I saw Bettina sit down to the table with a face beaming with satisfaction. In the afternoon I had to go to bed in consequence of a wound in my foot; the doctor accompanied his pupils to church; and Bettina, being alone, availed herself of the opportunity, came to my room and sat down on my bed. I had expected her visit, and I received it with pleasure, as it heralded an explanation for which I was positively longing.

She began by expressing a hope that I would not be angry with her for seizing the first opportunity she had of some conversation with me.

"No," I answered, "for you thus afford me an occasion of assuring you that, my feelings towards you being those of a friend only, you need not have any fear of my causing you any anxiety or displeasure. Therefore, Bettina, you may do whatever suits you; my love is no more. You have at one blow given the death-stroke to the intense passion which was blossoming in my heart. When I reached my room, after the ill-treatment I had experienced at Cordiani's hands, I felt for you nothing but hatred; that feeling soon merged into utter contempt, but that sensation itself was in time, when my mind recovered its balance, changed for a feeling of the deepest indifference, which again has given way when I see what power there is in your mind. I have now become your friend; I have conceived the greatest esteem

for your cleverness. I have been the dupe of it, but no matter; that talent of yours does exist, it is wonderful, divine, I admire it, I love it, and the highest homage I can render to it is, in my estimation, to foster for the possessor of it the purest feelings of friendship. Reciprocate that friendship, be true, sincere and plain-dealing. Give up all nonsense, for you have already obtained from me all I can give you. The very thought of love is repugnant to me; I can bestow my love only where I feel certain of being the only one loved. You are at liberty to lay my foolish delicacy to the account of my youthful age, but I feel so, and I cannot help it. You have written to me that you never speak to Cordiani; if I am the cause of that rupture between you, I regret it, and I think that, in the interest of your honour, you would do well to make up with him; for the future I must be careful never to give him any grounds for umbrage or suspicion. Recollect also that, if you have tempted him by the same manœuvres which you have employed towards me, you are doubly wrong, for it may be that, if he truly loves you, you have caused him to be miserable."

"All you have said to me," answered Bettina, "is grounded upon false impressions and deceptive appearances. I do not love Cordiani, and I never had any love for him; on the contrary, I have felt, and I do feel, for him a hatred which he has richly deserved, and I hope to convince you, in spite of every appearance which seems to convict me. As to the reproach of seduction, I entreat you to spare me such an accusation. On your side consider that, if you had not yourself thrown temptation in my way, I never would have committed towards you an action of which I have deeply repented, for reasons which you do not know, but which you must learn from me. The fault I have been guilty of is a serious one only because I did not foresee the injury it would do me in the inexperienced mind of the ingrate who dares to reproach me with it."

Bettina was shedding tears; all she had said was not unlikely and rather complimentary to my vanity, but I had seen too much. Besides, I knew the extent of her cleverness, and it was natural to attribute to her a wish to deceive me; how could I help thinking that her visit was prompted only by her self-love being too deeply wounded to let me enjoy a victory so humiliating to herself? Therefore, unshaken in my preconceived opinion, I told her that I placed implicit confidence in all she had just said respecting the state of her heart previous to the playful nonsense which had been the origin of my love for her, and that I promised never in the future to allude again to my accusation of seduction. "But," I continued, "confess that the fire at that time burning in your bosom was of only short duration and that the slightest breath of wind has been enough to extinguish it. Your virtue, which went astray for only one instant and which has so suddenly recovered its mastery over your senses, deserves some praise. You, with all your deep, adoring love for me, became all at once blind to my sorrow, whatever care I took to make it clear to

your sight. It remains for me to learn how that virtue could be so very dear to you at the very time that Cordiani took care to wreck it every night."

Bettina eyed me with the air of triumph which perfect confidence in victory gives to a person, and said: "You have just reached the point where I wished you to be. You shall now be made aware of things which I could not explain before, owing to your refusing the appointment which I then gave you for no other purpose than to tell you all the truth. Cordiani declared his love for me a week after he became an inmate in our house; he begged my consent to a marriage if his father made the demand of my hand as soon as he should have completed his studies. My answer was that I did not know him sufficiently, that I could form no idea on the subject, and I requested him not to allude to it any more. He appeared to have quietly given up the matter, but soon after I found out that it was not the case; he begged me one day to come to his room now and then to dress his hair; I told him that I had no time to spare, and he remarked that you were more fortunate. I laughed at this reproach, as everyone here knew that I had the care of you. It was a fortnight after my refusal to Cordiani that I unfortunately spent an hour with you in that loving nonsense which has naturally given you ideas until then unknown to your senses. That hour made me very happy; I loved you and, having given way to very natural desires, I revelled in my enjoyment without the slightest remorse of conscience. I was longing to be again with you the next morning, but after supper misfortune laid for the first time its hand upon me. Cordiani slipped into my hands this note and this letter which I have since hidden in a hole in the wall, with the intention of showing them to you at the first opportunity."

Saying this, Bettina handed me the note and the letter; the first ran as follows: "Admit me this evening into your closet, the door of which, leading to the yard, can be left ajar, or prepare yourself to make the best of it with the doctor, to whom I intend to deliver, if you should refuse my request, the letter of which I enclose a copy."

The letter contained the statement of a cowardly and enraged informer and would certainly have caused the most unpleasant results. In that letter Cordiani informed the doctor that his sister spent her mornings with me in criminal connection while he was saying his mass, and he pledged himself to enter into particulars which would leave him no doubt.

"After giving to the case the consideration it required," continued Bettina, "I made up my mind to hear that monster; but, my determination being fixed, I put in my pocket my father's stiletto, and, holding my door ajar, I waited for him there, unwilling to let him come in, as my closet is divided by only a thin partition from the room of my father, whom the slightest noise might have roused up. My first question to Cordiani was in reference to the slander contained in the letter he threatened to deliver to my brother; he answered that it was no slander, for he had been a witness to everything that had

taken place in the morning through a hole he had bored in the garret just above your bed and to which he would apply his eye the moment he knew that I was in your room. He wound up by threatening to discover everything to my brother and to my mother unless I granted him the same favours I had bestowed upon you. In my just indignation I loaded him with the most bitter insults; I called him a cowardly spy and slanderer, for he could not have seen anything but childish playfulness, and I declared to him that he need not flatter himself that any threat would compel me to give the slightest compliance to his wishes. He then begged and begged my pardon a thousand times and went on assuring me that I must lay to my rigour the odium of the step he had taken, the only excuse for it being in the fervent love I had kindled in his heart, and which made him miserable. He acknowledged that his letter might be a slander, that he had acted treacherously, and he pledged his honour never to attempt obtaining from me by violence favours which he desired to merit only by the constancy of his love. I then thought myself to some extent compelled to say that I might love him at some future time, and to promise that I would not again come near your bed during the absence of my brother. In this way I dismissed him satisfied, without his daring to beg for so much as a kiss, but with the promise that we might now and then have some conversation in the same place. As soon as he left me I went to bed, deeply grieved that I could no longer see you in the absence of my brother and that I was unable, for fear of consequences, to let you know the reason of my change. Three weeks passed off in that position, and I cannot express what have been my sufferings, for you, of course, urged me to come, and I was always under the painful necessity of disappointing you. I even feared to find myself alone with you, for I felt certain that I could not have refrained from telling you the cause of the change in my conduct. To crown my misery, add that I found myself compelled, at least once a week, to receive the vile Cordiani outside my room and to speak to him, in order to check his impatience with a few words. At last, unable to bear up any longer under such misery, threatened likewise by you, I determined to end my agony. I wished to disclose to you all this intrigue, leaving to you the care of bringing a change for the better, and for that purpose I proposed that you should accompany me to the ball disguised as a girl, although I knew it would enrage Cordiani; but my mind was made up. You know how my scheme fell to the ground. The unexpected departure of my brother with my father suggested to both of you the same idea, and it was before receiving Cordiani's letter that I promised to come to you. Cordiani did not ask for an appointment; he only stated that he would be waiting for me in my closet, and I had no opportunity of telling him that I could not allow him to come, any more than I could find time to let you know that I would be with you only after midnight, as I intended to do, for I reckoned that after an hour's talk I would dismiss the wretch to his room. But my reckoning was wrong; Cordiani had conceived a

scheme, and I could not help listening to all he had to say about it. His whining and exaggerated complaints had no end. He upbraided me for refusing to further the plan he had concocted and which he thought I would accept with rapture if I loved him. The scheme was for me to elope with him during holy week and to run away to Ferrara, where he had an uncle who would have given us a kind welcome and would soon have brought his father to forgive him and to insure our happiness for life. The objections I made, his answers, the details to be entered into, the explanations and the ways and means to be examined to obviate the difficulties of the project, took up the whole night. My heart was bleeding as I thought of you; but my conscience is at rest, and I did nothing that could render me unworthy of your esteem. You cannot refuse it to me, unless you believe that the confession I have just made is untrue; but you would be both mistaken and unjust. Had I made up my mind to sacrifice myself and to grant favours which love alone ought to obtain, I might have got rid of the treacherous wretch within one hour, but death seemed preferable to such a dreadful expedient. Could I in any way suppose that you were outside my door, exposed to the wind and snow? Both of us were deserving of pity, but my misery was still greater than yours. All these fearful circumstances were written in the book of fate to make me lose my reason, which now returns only at intervals, and I am in constant dread of a fresh attack of those awful convulsions. They say I am bewitched and possessed of the demon; I do not know anything about it, but, if it should be true, I am the most miserable creature in existence."

Bettina ceased speaking and burst into a violent storm of tears, sobs and groans. I was deeply moved, although I felt that all she had said might be true and yet was scarcely worthy of belief:

*Forse era ver, mà non pero credibile
A chi del senso suo fosse signor.*

But she was weeping, and her tears, which at all events were not deceptive, took away from me the faculty of doubt. Yet I put her tears to the account of her wounded self-love; to give way entirely, I needed a thorough conviction; and to obtain it, evidence was necessary; probability was not enough. I could not admit either Cordiani's moderation or Bettina's patience or the fact of seven hours employed in innocent conversation. In spite of all these considerations, I felt a sort of pleasure in accepting for ready cash all the counterfeit coins that she had spread out before me.

After drying her tears, Bettina fixed her beautiful eyes upon mine, thinking that she could discern in them evident signs of her victory; but I surprised her much by alluding to one point which, with all her cunning, she had neglected to mention in her defence. Rhetoric makes use of nature's secrets in the same way as painters who try to imitate it: their most beautiful work is false. This young girl, whose mind had not been refined by study, aimed at being considered innocent

and artless, and she did her best to succeed, but I had seen too good a specimen of her cleverness.

"Well, my dear Bettina," I said, "your story has affected me; but how do you think I am going to accept your convulsions as natural and believe in the demoniac symptoms which came on so seasonably during the exorcisms, although you very properly expressed your doubts on the matter?"

Hearing this, Bettina stared at me, remaining silent for a few minutes; then, casting her eyes down, she gave way to fresh tears, exclaiming now and then, "Poor me! oh, poor me!" This situation, however, becoming most painful for me, I asked what I could do for her. She answered in a sad tone that, if my heart did not suggest to me what to do, she did not herself see what she could demand of me.

"I thought," said she, "that I would reconquer my lost influence over your heart, but, I see it too plainly, you no longer feel an interest in me. Go on treating me harshly; go on taking for mere fictions sufferings which are but too real, which you have caused and which you will now increase. Some day, but too late, you will be sorry, and your repentance will be bitter indeed."

As she pronounced these words, she rose to take her leave; but, judging her capable of anything, I felt afraid, and I detained her to say that the only way to regain my affection was to remain one month without convulsions and without handsome Father Mancia's presence being required.

"I cannot help being convulsed," she answered, "but what do you mean by applying to the Jacobin that epithet of *handsome*? Could you suppose——?"

"Not at all, not at all—I suppose nothing; to do so, it would be necessary for me to be jealous. But I cannot help saying that the preference given by your devils to the exorcism of that handsome monk over the incantations of the ugly Capuchin is likely to give birth to remarks rather detrimental to your honour. However, you are free to do whatever pleases you."

Thereupon she left my room, and a few minutes later everybody came home.

After supper the servant, without any question on my part, informed me that Bettina had gone to bed with violent feverish chills, having previously had her bed carried into the kitchen beside her mother's. This attack of fever might be real, but I had my doubts. I felt certain that she would never make up her mind to be well, for her good health would have supplied me with too strong an argument against her pretended innocence, even in the case of Cordiani; I likewise considered her idea of having her bed placed near her mother's nothing but an artful contrivance.

The next day Doctor Olivo found her very feverish and told her brother that she would most likely be excited and delirious, but that it would be the effect of the fever and not the work of the devil. And

truly, Bettina was raving all day, but Doctor Gozzi, placing implicit confidence in the physician, would not listen to his mother and did not send for the Jacobin friar. The fever increased in violence, and on the fourth day the smallpox broke out. Cordiani and the two Feltrini brothers, who had so far escaped that disease, were immediately sent away, but, as I had had it before, I remained at home.

The poor girl was so fearfully covered with the loathsome eruption that on the sixth day her skin could not be seen on any part of her body. Her eyes closed, and her life was despaired of when it was found that her mouth and her throat were obstructed to such a degree that she could swallow nothing but a few drops of honey. She was perfectly motionless; she breathed and that was all. Her mother never left her bedside, and I was thought a saint when I carried my table and my books into the patient's room. The unfortunate girl had become a fearful sight to look upon; her head was dreadfully swollen, the nose could no longer be seen, and much fear was entertained for her eyes, in case her life should be spared. The odour of her perspiration was most offensive, but I persisted in keeping my watch by her.

On the ninth day the vicar gave her absolution and, after administering extreme unction, left her, as he said, in the hands of God. In the midst of so much sadness, the conversation of the mother with her son would, in spite of myself, cause me some amount of merriment. The good woman wanted to know whether the demon who was dwelling in her child could still influence her to perform extravagant follies and what would become of the demon in the case of her daughter's death, for, as she expressed it, she could not think of his being so stupid as to remain in so loathsome a body. She particularly wanted to ascertain whether the demon had power to carry off the soul of her child. Doctor Gozzi, who was an ubiquitarian, made to all those questions answers which had not even the shadow of good sense and which of course had no other effect than to increase a hundred fold the perplexity of his poor mother.

During the tenth and eleventh days Bettina was so bad that we thought every moment likely to be her last. The disease had reached its worst period; the smell was unbearable; I alone would not leave her, so sorely did I pity her. The heart of man is indeed an unfathomable abyss, for, however incredible it may appear, it was while in that fearful state that Bettina inspired me with the fondness which I showed her after her recovery.

On the thirteenth day the fever abated, but the patient began to experience great irritation, owing to a dreadful itching, which no remedy could have allayed as effectually as these powerful words which I kept constantly pouring into her ear: "Bettina, you are getting better; but, if you dare to scratch yourself, you will become such a fright that nobody will ever love you." All the physicians in the universe might be challenged to prescribe a more potent remedy against itching for a girl who, aware that she has been pretty, finds

herself exposed to the loss of her beauty through her own fault if she scratches herself.

At last her fine eyes opened again to the light of heaven; she was moved to her own room, but she had to keep her bed until Easter. She inoculated me with a few pocks, three of which have left upon my face everlasting marks; but in her eyes they gave me credit for great devotedness, for they were a proof of my constant care, and she felt that I indeed deserved her whole love. And she truly loved me, and I returned her love, although I never plucked a flower which fate and prejudice kept in store for a husband. But what a contemptible husband!

Two years later she married a shoemaker, by name Pigozzo—a base, arrant knave, who beggared and ill-treated her to such an extent that her brother had to take her home and provide for her. Fifteen years afterwards, having been appointed arch-priest at St. George de la Vallée, he took her there with him, and, when I went to pay him a visit eighteen years ago, I found Bettina old, ill and dying. She breathed her last in my arms in 1776, twenty-four hours after my arrival. I will speak of her death in good time.

About that period my mother returned from St. Petersburg, where the Empress Anne Iwanowa had not approved of the Italian comedy. The whole of the troupe had already returned to Italy, and my mother had travelled with Carlin Bertinazzi, the harlequin, who died in Paris in the year 1783. As soon as she had reached Padua, she informed Doctor Gozzi of her arrival, and he lost no time in accompanying me to the inn where she had put up. We dined with her, and, before bidding us adieu, she presented the doctor with a splendid fur and gave me the skin of a lynx for Bettina. Six months afterwards she summoned me to Venice, as she wished to see me before leaving for Dresden, where she had contracted an engagement for life in the service of the Elector of Saxony, Augustus III, King of Poland. She took with her my brother Jean, then eight years old, who was weeping bitterly when he left; I thought him very foolish, for there was nothing very tragic in that departure. He is the only one in the family who was wholly indebted to our mother for his fortune, although he was not her favourite child.

I spent another year in Padua, studying law, in which I took the degree of Doctor in my sixteenth year, the subject of my thesis being in the civil law, *De testamentis* and in the canon law, *Utrum Hebræi possint construere novas synagogas*.

My vocation was to study medicine and to practice it, for I felt a great inclination for that profession, but no heed was given to my wishes, and I was compelled to apply myself to the study of the law, for which I had an invincible repugnance. My friends were of opinion that I could not make my fortune in any profession but that of advocate, and, what is still worse, an ecclesiastical advocate. If they had given the matter proper consideration, they would have given me leave to follow my own inclinations, and I would have been a physician—

a profession in which quackery is of still greater avail than in the legal business. I never became either a physician or an advocate, and I never would apply to a lawyer, when I had any legal business, nor call in a physician when I happened to be ill. Lawsuits and pettifoggery may support a good many families, but a greater proportion is ruined by them, and those who perish in the hands of physicians are more numerous by far than those who get cured—strong evidence, in my opinion, that mankind would be much less miserable without either lawyers or doctors.

To attend the lectures of the professors, I had to go to the university called the Bo, and it became necessary for me to go out alone. This was a matter of great wonder to me, for until then I had never considered myself a free man; and, in my wish to enjoy the liberty I thought I had just conquered, it was not long before I had made the very worst acquaintances amongst the most notorious students. As a matter of course, the most renowned were the most worthless, dissolute fellows, gamblers, frequenters of disorderly houses, hard drinkers, debauchees, tormentors and suborners of honest girls, liars and wholly incapable of any good or virtuous feeling. In the company of such men did I begin my apprenticeship of the world, learning my lesson from the book of experience.

The theory of morals and its usefulness through the life of man can be compared to the advantage derived by running over the index of a book before reading it: when we have perused that index, we know nothing but the subject of the work. This is like the school for morals offered by the sermons, the precepts and the tales which our instructors recite for our especial benefit. We lend our whole attention to those lessons, but, when an opportunity offers of profiting by the advice thus bestowed upon us, we feel inclined to ascertain for ourselves whether the result will turn out as predicted; we give way to that very natural inclination, and punishment speedily follows, with concomitant repentance. Our only consolation lies in the fact that in such moments we are conscious of our own knowledge and consider ourselves as having earned the right to instruct others; but those to whom we wish to impart our experience act exactly as we have acted before them, and, as a matter of course, the world remains *in statu quo*, or grows worse and worse.

When Doctor Gozzi granted me the privilege of going out alone, he gave me an opportunity for the discovery of several truths which, until then, not only were unknown to me, but the very existence of which I had never suspected. On my first appearance the boldest scholars got hold of me and sounded my depth. Finding that I was a thorough freshman, they undertook my education and, with that worthy purpose in view, allowed me to fall blindly into every trap. They taught me gambling, won the little I possessed and then made me play on trust and put me up to dishonest practices in order to procure the means of paying my gambling debts; but I acquired at the same time the sad experience of sorrow! Yet these hard lessons proved useful,

for they taught me to mistrust the impudent sycophants who openly flatter their dupes, and never to rely upon the offers made by fawning flatterers. They taught me likewise how to behave in the company of quarrelsome duellists, the society of whom ought to be avoided unless we make up our mind to be constantly in the very teeth of danger. I was not caught in the snares of professional lewd women because not one of them was in my eyes as pretty as Bettina, but I did not resist so well the desire for that species of vain-glory which is the reward of holding life at a cheap price.

In those days the students of Padua enjoyed very great privileges, which were in reality abuses made legal through prescription, the primitive characteristics of privilege, which differ essentially from prerogatives. In fact, in order to maintain the legality of their privileges, the students often committed crimes. The guilty were dealt with tenderly because the interest of the city demanded that severity should not diminish the great influx of scholars who flocked to that renowned university from every part of Europe. The practice of the Venetian government was to secure at a high salary the most celebrated professors and to grant the utmost freedom to the young men attending their lessons. The students acknowledged no authority but that of a chief, chosen among themselves, and called *syndic*. He was usually a foreign nobleman who could keep a large establishment and who was responsible to the government for the behaviour of the scholars. It was his duty to give them up to justice when they transgressed the laws, and the students never disputed his sentence because he always defended them to the utmost when they had the slightest shadow of right on their side.

The students, amongst other privileges, would not suffer their trunks to be searched by custom-house authorities, and no ordinary policeman would have dared to arrest one of them. They carried about them forbidden weapons, seduced helpless girls and often disturbed the public peace by their nocturnal broils and impudent practical jokes; in one word, they were a body of young fellows whom nothing could restrain, who would gratify every whim and enjoy their sport without regard or consideration for any human being.

It was about that time that a policeman entered a coffee-room, in which were seated two students. One of them ordered him out, but the man taking no notice of it, the student fired a pistol at him and missed his aim. The policeman returned the fire, wounded the aggressor and ran away. The students immediately mustered together at the Bo, divided into bands and went over the city, hunting the policemen to murder them and avenge the insult they had received. In one of the encounters two of the students were killed, and all the others, assembling in one troop, swore never to lay down their arms as long as there should be one policeman alive in Padua. The authorities had to interfere, and the *syndic* of the students undertook to put a stop to hostilities, provided proper satisfaction was given, as the police were in the wrong. The man who had shot the student in the coffee-room

was hanged, and peace was restored; but during the eight days of agitation, as I was anxious not to appear less brave than my comrades who were patrolling the city, I followed them, in spite of Doctor Gozzi's remonstrances. Armed with a carbine and a pair of pistols, I ran about the town with the others, in quest of the enemy, and I recollect how disappointed I was because the troop to which I belonged did not meet one policeman. When the war was over, the doctor laughed at me, but Bettina admired my valour.

Unfortunately, I indulged in expenses far above my means, owing to my unwillingness to seem poorer than my new friends. I sold or pledged everything I possessed and contracted debts which I could not possibly pay. This state of things caused my first sorrows, and they are the most poignant sorrows under which a young man can smart. Not knowing which way to turn, I wrote to my excellent grandmother, begging her assistance, but, instead of sending me some money, she came to Padua on the 1st of October, 1739, and, after thanking the doctor and Bettina for all their affectionate care, took me back to Venice. As he took leave of me, the doctor, who was shedding tears, gave me what he prized most on earth, a relic of some saint, which perhaps I might have kept to this very day, had not the setting been of gold. It performed only one miracle, that of being of service to me in a moment of great need. Whenever I visited Padua to complete my study of the law, I stayed at the house of the kind doctor, but I was always grieved at seeing near Bettina the brute to whom she was engaged and who did not appear to me deserving of such a wife. I have always regretted that a prejudice, of which I soon got rid, should have made me preserve for that man a flower which I could have plucked so easily.

CHAPTER 4

"He comes from Padua, where he has completed his studies." Such were the words by which I was everywhere introduced and which, the moment they were uttered, called upon me the silent observation of every young man of my age and condition, the compliments of all fathers and the caresses of old women, as well as the kisses of a few who, although not old, were not sorry to be considered so for the sake of embracing a young man without impropriety. The curate of St. Samuel, the Abbé Josello, presented me to Monsignor Correre, Patriarch of Venice, who gave me the tonsure and who four months afterwards, by special favour, admitted me to the four minor orders. No words could express the joy and the pride of my grandmother. Excellent masters were given to me to continue my studies, and M. Baffo chose the Abbé Schiavo to teach me a pure Italian style, especially poetry, for which I had a decided talent. I was very comfortably lodged with my brother François, who was studying theatrical architecture. My sister and my youngest brother were living with our

grandam in a house of her own, in which it was her wish to die because her husband had there breathed his last. The house in which I dwelt was the same in which my father had died and the rent of which my mother continued to pay. It was large and well furnished.

Although Abbé Grimani was my chief protector, I seldom saw him, and I particularly attached myself to M. de Malipiero, to whom I had been presented by the curate Josello. M. de Malipiero was a senator who was unwilling at seventy years of age to attend any more to State affairs and enjoyed a happy, sumptuous life in his mansions, surrounded every evening by a well chosen party of ladies who had all known how to make the best of their younger days, and of gentlemen who were always acquainted with the news of the town. He was a bachelor and wealthy, but unfortunately he had three or four times every year severe attacks of gout, which always left him crippled in some part or other of his body, so that all his person was disabled. His head, his lungs and his stomach had alone escaped this cruel havoc. He was still a fine man, a great epicure and a good judge of wine; his wit was keen, his knowledge of the world extensive, his eloquence worthy of a son of Venice, and he had that wisdom which must naturally belong to a senator who for forty years has had the management of public affairs and to a man who has bid farewell to women after having possessed twenty mistresses, and only when he felt himself compelled to acknowledge that he could no longer seek to content any woman. Although almost entirely crippled, he did not appear to be so when he was seated, when he talked or when he was at table. He had only one meal a day and always took it alone because, being toothless and unable to eat otherwise than very slowly, he did not wish to hurry himself out of compliment to his guests and would have been sorry to see them waiting for him. This feeling deprived him of the pleasure he would have enjoyed in entertaining at his board friendly and agreeable guests, and caused great sorrow to his excellent cook.

The first time I had the honour of being introduced to him by the curate, I opposed earnestly the reason which made him eat his meals in solitude, and I said that His Excellency had only to invite guests whose appetite was good enough to enable them to eat a double share.

"But where can I find such table companions?" he asked.

"It is rather a delicate matter," I answered, "but you must take your guests on trial, and, after they have been found such as you wish them to be, the only difficulty will be to keep them as your guests without their being aware of the real cause of your preference, for no respectable man could acknowledge that he enjoys the honour of sitting at Your Excellency's table only because he eats twice as much as any other man."

The senator understood the truth of my argument and asked the curate to bring me to dinner on the following day. He found my practice even better than my theory, and I became his daily guest.

This man, who had given up everything in life except his own self, fostered an amorous inclination, in spite of his age and his gout. He

loved a young girl named Thérèse Imer, the daughter of an actor residing near his mansion, her bedroom window being opposite to his own. This young girl, then in her seventeenth year, was pretty, whimsical and a regular coquette. She was practising music with a view to entering the theatrical profession, and, by showing herself constantly at the window, she had intoxicated the old senator and was playing with him cruelly. She paid him a daily visit, but always escorted by her mother, a former actress, who had retired from the stage in order to work out her salvation and who, as a matter of course, had made up her mind to combine the interests of heaven with the works of this world. She took her daughter to mass every day and compelled her to go to confession every week; but every afternoon she accompanied her in a visit to the amorous old man, the rage of whom frightened me when she refused him a kiss, under the plea that she had performed her devotions in the morning and could not reconcile herself to the idea of offending the God who was still dwelling in her.

What a sight for a young man of fifteen like me, whom the old man admitted as the only and silent witness of these erotic scenes! The miserable mother applauded her daughter's reserve and went so far as to lecture the elderly lover, who, in his turn, dared not refute her maxims, which savoured either too much or too little of Christianity, and resisted a very strong inclination to hurl at her head any object he had at hand. Anger would then take the place of lewd desires, and, after they had retired, he would comfort himself by exchanging with me philosophical considerations.

Compelled to answer him and not knowing well what to say, I ventured one day upon advising a marriage. He struck me with amazement when he answered that she refused to marry him from fear of drawing upon herself the hatred of his relatives.

"Then make her the offer of a large sum of money or a position."

"She says that she would not, even for a crown, commit a deadly sin."

"In that case, you must either take her by storm or banish her forever from your presence."

"I can do neither one nor the other; physical as well as moral strength is deficient in me."

"Kill her, then."

"That will very likely be the case unless I die first."

"Indeed I pity Your Excellency."

"Do you sometimes visit her?"

"No, for I might fall in love with her, and I would be miserable."

"You are right."

Witnessing many such scenes and taking part in many similar conversations, I became an especial favourite with the old nobleman. I was invited to his evening assemblies, which were, as I have stated before, frequented by superannuated women and witty men. He told me that in this circle I would learn a science of greater import than Gassendi's philosophy, which I was then studying by his advice instead

of Aristotle's, which he turned into ridicule. He laid down some precepts for my conduct in those assemblies, explaining the necessity of my observing them, as there would be some wonder at a young man of my age being received at such parties. He ordered me never to open my lips except to answer direct questions and particularly enjoined me never to pass an opinion on any subject, because at my age I could not be allowed to have any opinions.

I faithfully followed his precepts and obeyed his orders so well that in a few days I had gained his esteem and become the child of the house, as well as the favourite of all ladies who visited him. In my character of a young and innocent ecclesiastic they would ask me to accompany them in their visits to the convents where their daughters or their nieces were educated; I was at all hours received at their houses without even being announced; I was scolded if a week elapsed without my calling upon them; and, when I went to the apartments reserved for the young ladies, they would run away, but the moment they saw that the intruder was only I, they would return at once, and their confidence was very charming to me.

Before dinner M. de Malipiero would often inquire from me what advantages were accruing to me from the welcome I received at the hands of the respectable ladies I had become acquainted with at his house, taking care to tell me, before I could have time to answer, that they were all endowed with the greatest virtue and that I would give everybody a bad opinion of myself if I ever breathed one word of disparagement of the high reputation they all enjoyed. In this way he would inculcate in me the wise precept of reserve and discretion.

It was at the senator's house that I made the acquaintance of Madame Manzoni, the wife of a notary public, of whom I shall have to speak very often. This worthy lady inspired me with the deepest attachment and gave me the wisest advice. Had I followed it and profited by it, my life would not have been exposed to so many storms; it is true that, in that case, my life would not be worth writing.

All these fine acquaintances amongst women who enjoyed the reputation of being high-bred ladies gave me a very natural desire to shine by my good looks and by the elegance of my dress; but my father confessor, as well as my grandmother, objected very strongly to this feeling of vanity. On one occasion, taking me aside, the curate told me with honeyed words that in the profession to which I had devoted myself my thoughts ought to dwell upon the best means of being agreeable to God and not on pleasing the world by my fine appearance. He condemned my elaborate curls and the exquisite perfume of my pomatum. He said that the devil had got hold of me by the hair, that I would be excommunicated if I continued to take such care of it, and concluded by quoting for my benefit these words from an œcumenical council: *clericus qui nutrit comam, anathema sit*. I answered him with the names of several fashionable perfumed abbots who were not threatened with excommunication, who were not interfered with, although they wore four times as much powder as I did

(for I used only a slight sprinkling), who perfumed their hair with a certain amber-scented pomatum which brought women to the very point of fainting, while mine, a jessamine pomade, called forth the compliments of every circle in which I was received. I added that I could not, much to my regret, obey him and that, if I had meant to live in slovenliness, I would have become a Capuchin and not an abbé.

My answer made him so angry that three or four days afterwards he contrived to obtain leave from my grandmother to enter my chamber early in the morning, before I was awake, and, approaching my bed on tiptoe with a sharp pair of scissors, he cut off unmercifully all my front hair from one ear to the other. My brother François was in the adjoining room and saw him, but did not interfere, as he was delighted at my misfortune. He wore a wig and was very jealous of my beautiful head of hair. François was envious through the whole of his life; yet he combined this feeling of envy with friendship; I never could understand him; but this vice of his, like my own vices, must by this time have died of old age.

After his great operation the abbé left my room quietly, but, when I woke up shortly afterwards and realised all the horror of this unheard-of execution, my rage and mortification were indeed wrought to the highest pitch.

What wild schemes of revenge my brain engendered while, with a looking-glass in my hand, I was groaning over the shameful havoc performed by this audacious priest! At the noise I made, my grandmother hastened to my room, and amidst my brother's laughter the kind old woman assured me that the priest would never have been allowed to enter my room if she could have foreseen his intention, and she managed to soothe my passion to some extent by confessing that he had overstepped the limits of his right to administer a reproof.

But I was determined upon revenge and went on dressing myself and revolving in my mind the darkest plots. It seemed to me that I was entitled to the most cruel revenge without having anything to dread from the terrors of the law. The theatres being open at that time, I put on a mask to go out and went to the advocate Carrare, with whom I had become acquainted at the senator's house, to inquire from him whether I could bring a suit against the priest. He told me that but a short time since a family had been ruined for having sheared the moustache of a Sclavonian, a crime not nearly so atrocious as the shearing of all my front locks, and that I had only to give him my instructions to begin a criminal suit against the abbé which would make him tremble. I gave my consent and begged that he would tell M. de Malipiero in the evening the reason for which I could not go to his house, for I did not feel any inclination to show myself anywhere until my hair had grown again.

I went home and partook with my brother of a repast which appeared rather scanty in comparison to the dinners I had with the old senator. The privation of the delicate and plentiful fare to which His Excellency had accustomed me was most painful, not to mention all

the enjoyments from which I was excluded through the atrocious conduct of the virulent priest, who was my godfather. I wept from sheer vexation, and my rage was increased by the consciousness that there was in this insult a certain dash of comical fun which threw over me a ridicule more disgraceful in my estimation than the greatest crime.

I went to bed early, and, refreshed by ten hours of profound slumber, I felt in the morning somewhat less angry, but quite as determined to summon the priest before a court. I was dressing, with the intention of calling upon my advocate, when I received the visit of a skilful hairdresser whom I had seen at Madame Cantarini's house. He told me that he was sent by M. de Malipiero to arrange my hair so that I could go out, as the senator wished me to dine with him on that very day. He examined the damage done to my head and said, with a smile, that, if I would trust to his art, he would undertake to send me out with an appearance of even greater elegance than I could boast of before; and truly, when he had done, I found myself so good-looking that I considered my thirst for revenge entirely satisfied.

Having thus forgotten the injury, I called upon the lawyer to tell him to stay all proceedings and hastened to M. de Malipiero's palace, where, as chance would have it, I met the abbé. Notwithstanding all my joy, I could not help casting upon him rather unfriendly looks, but not a word was said about what had taken place. The senator noticed everything, and the priest took his leave, most likely with feelings of mortified repentance, for this time I most verily deserved excommunication by the extreme studied elegance of my curling hair.

When my cruel godfather had left us, I did not dissemble with M. de Malipiero; I candidly told him that I would look out for another church and that nothing would induce me to remain under a priest who, in his wrath, could go to the length of such proceedings. The wise old man agreed with me and said that I was quite right; it was the best way to make me do ultimately whatever he liked. In the evening everyone in our circle, being well aware of what had happened, complimented me and assured me that nothing could be handsomer than my new head-dress. I was delighted and was still more gratified when, after a fortnight had elapsed, I found that M. de Malipiero did not broach the subject of my returning to my godfather's church. My grandmother alone constantly urged me to return. But this calm was the harbinger of a storm. When my mind was thoroughly at rest on that subject, M. de Malipiero threw me into the greatest astonishment by suddenly telling me that an excellent opportunity offered itself for me to reappear in the church and secure ample satisfaction from the abbé.

"It is my province," added the senator, "as president of the Confraternity of the Holy Sacrament, to choose the preacher who is to deliver the sermon on the fourth Sunday of this month, which happens to be the second Christmas holiday. I mean to appoint you, and I am certain that the abbé will not dare to reject my choice. What say you to such a triumphant reappearance? Does it satisfy you?"

This offer caused me the greatest surprise, for I had never dreamt of becoming a preacher and had never been vain enough to suppose that I could write a sermon and deliver it in the church. I told M. de Malipiero that he must surely be enjoying a joke at my expense, but he answered that he had spoken in earnest, and he soon contrived to persuade me and make me believe that I was born to become the most renowned preacher of our age as soon as I should have grown fat—a quality which I certainly could not boast of, for at that time I was extremely thin. I had not the shadow of a fear as to my voice or my elocution, and, for the matter of composing my sermon, I felt myself equal to the production of a masterpiece.

I told M. de Malipiero that I was ready and anxious to be at home in order to go to work; that, although no theologian, I was acquainted with my subject and would compose a sermon which would take everyone by surprise on account of its novelty.

On the following day, when I called upon him, he informed me that the abbé had expressed unqualified delight at the choice made by him and at my readiness in accepting the appointment; but he likewise desired that I should submit my sermon to him as soon as it was written, because, the subject belonging to the most sublime theology, he could not allow me to enter the pulpit without being satisfied that I would not utter any heresies. I agreed to this demand, and during the week I gave birth to my masterpiece. I have now that first sermon in my possession, and I cannot help saying that, considering my tender years, I think it a very good one.

I could not give an idea of my grandmother's joy; she wept tears of happiness at having a grandson who had become an apostle. She insisted upon my reading my sermon to her, listened to it with her beads in her hands and pronounced it very beautiful. M. de Malipiero, who had no rosary when I read it to him, was of opinion that it would not prove acceptable to the parson. My text was from Horace: *Plorare suis non respondere favorem speratum meritis*; and I deplored the wickedness and ingratitude of men, through which had failed the design adopted by Divine wisdom for the redemption of humankind. But M. de Malipiero was sorry that I had taken my text from any heretical poet, although he was pleased that my sermon was not interlarded with Latin quotations.

I called upon the priest to read my production; but, as he was out, I had to wait for his return, and during that time I fell in love with his niece, Angela. She was busy upon some tambour work; I sat down close by her, and, telling me that she had long desired to make my acquaintance, she begged me to relate the history of the locks of hair sheared by her venerable uncle.

My love for Angela proved fatal to me because from it sprang two other love affairs which, in their turn, gave birth to a great many others and caused me finally to renounce the Church as a profession. But let us proceed quietly and not encroach upon future events.

On his return home the abbé found me with his niece, who was

about my age, and he did not appear to be angry. I gave him my sermon; he read it over and told me that it was a beautiful academical dissertation, but unfit for a sermon from the pulpit, and he added, "I will give you a sermon written by myself which I have never delivered; you will commit it to memory, and I promise to let everybody suppose that it is of your own composition."

"I thank you, very reverend father, but I will preach my own sermon or none at all."

"At all events you shall not preach such a sermon at this in my church."

"You can talk the matter over with M. de Malipiero. In the meantime I will take my work to the censorship and to His Eminence the Patriarch, and, if it is not accepted, I shall have it printed."

"All very well, young man. The patriarch will agree with me."

In the evening I related my discussion with the parson before all the guests of M. de Malipiero. The reading of my sermon was called for, and it was praised by all. They lauded me for having with proper modesty refrained from quoting the holy fathers of the Church, whom at my age I could not be supposed to have sufficiently studied, and the ladies particularly admired me because there was no Latin in it but the text from Horace, who, although a great libertine himself, has written very good things. A niece of the patriarch who was present that evening promised to prepare her uncle in my favour, as I had expressed my intention to appeal to him; but M. de Malipiero desired me not to take any steps in the matter until I had seen him on the following day, and I submissively bowed to his wishes.

When I called at his mansion the next day, he sent for the priest, who soon made his appearance. As he knew well what he had been sent for, he immediately launched out into a very long discourse, which I did not interrupt, but the moment he had concluded his list of objections, I told him that there could not be two ways to decide the question, that the patriarch would either approve or disapprove my sermon.

"In the first case," I added, "I can pronounce it in your church, and no responsibility can possibly fall upon your shoulders; in the second I must, of course, give way."

The abbé was struck by my determination and said:

"Do not go to the patriarch; I accept your sermon; I only request you to change your text. Horace was a villain."

"Why do you quote Seneca, Tertullian, Origen and Boethius? They were all heretics and must consequently be considered by you as worse wretches than Horace, who, after all, never had the chance of becoming a Christian."

However, as I saw that it would please M. de Malipiero, I finally consented to accept, as a substitute for mine, a text offered by the abbé, although it did not suit in any way the spirit of my production; and, in order to get an opportunity for a visit to his niece, I gave him my manuscript, saying that I would call for it the next day. My vanity prompted me to send a copy to Doctor Gozzi, but the good man caused

me much amusement by returning it and writing that I must have gone mad and that, if I were allowed to deliver such a sermon from the pulpit, I would bring dishonour upon myself as well as upon the man who had educated me.

I cared but little for his opinion and on the appointed day delivered my sermon in the Church of the Holy Sacrament in the presence of the best society of Venice. I received much applause, and every one predicted that I would certainly become the first preacher of our century, as no young ecclesiastic of fifteen had ever been known to preach as well as I had done. It is customary for the faithful to deposit their offerings for the preacher in a purse which is handed to them for that purpose. The sexton who emptied it of its contents found in it more than fifty sequins and several *billets doux*, to the great scandal of the weaker brethren. An anonymous note amongst them, the writer of which I thought I had guessed, led me into a mistake which I think better not to relate. This rich harvest, in my penury, caused me to entertain serious thoughts of becoming a preacher, and I confided my intention to the parson, requesting his assistance to carry it into execution. This gave me the privilege of visiting at his house every day, and I improved the opportunity of conversing with Angela, for whom my love was daily increasing. But Angela was virtuous. She did not object to my love, but wished me to renounce the Church and marry her. In spite of my infatuation for her, I could not make up my mind to such a step, and I went on seeing her and courting her in the hope that she would alter her decision.

The priest, who had at last confessed his admiration for my first sermon, asked me some time afterwards to prepare another for St. Joseph's Day, with an invitation to deliver it on the 19th of March, 1741. I composed it, and the abbé spoke of it with enthusiasm, but fate had decided that I should never preach but once in my life. It is a sad tale, unfortunately for me very true, which some persons are cruel enough to consider very amusing.

Young and rather self-conceited, I fancied that it was not necessary for me to spend much time in committing my sermon to memory. Being the author, I had all the ideas contained in my work classified in my mind, and it did not seem to me within the range of possibilities that I could forget what I had written. Perhaps I might not remember the exact words of a sentence, but I was at liberty to replace them by other expressions as good, and, as I never happened to be at a loss or to be struck dumb when I spoke in society, it was not likely that such an untoward accident would befall me before an audience amongst whom I did not know anyone who could intimidate me and cause me suddenly to lose the faculty of reason or of speech. I therefore followed my fancy, as usual, being satisfied with reading my sermon morning and evening, in order to impress it upon my memory, which until then had never betrayed me.

The 19th of March came, and on that eventful day at four o'clock in the afternoon I was to ascend the pulpit; but, believing myself quite

about my age, and he did not appear to be angry. I gave him my sermon; he read it over and told me that it was a beautiful academical dissertation, but unfit for a sermon from the pulpit, and he added, "I will give you a sermon written by myself which I have never delivered; you will commit it to memory, and I promise to let everybody suppose that it is of your own composition."

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me much amusement by returning it and writing that I must have gone mad and that, if I were allowed to deliver such a sermon from the pulpit, I would bring dishonour upon myself as well as upon the man who had educated me.

I cared but little for his opinion and on the appointed day delivered my sermon in the Church of the Holy Sacrament in the presence of the best society of Venice. I received much applause, and every one predicted that I would certainly become the first preacher of our century, as no young ecclesiastic of fifteen had ever been known to preach as well as I had done. It is customary for the faithful to deposit their offerings for the preacher in a purse which is handed to them for that purpose. The sexton who emptied it of its contents found in it more than fifty sequins and several *billets doux*, to the great scandal of the weaker brethren. An anonymous note amongst them, the writer of which I thought I had guessed, led me into a mistake which I think better not to relate. This rich harvest, in my penury, caused me to entertain serious thoughts of becoming a preacher, and I confided my intention to the parson, requesting his assistance to carry it into execution. This gave me the privilege of visiting at his house every day, and I improved the opportunity of conversing with Angela, for whom my love was daily increasing. But Angela was virtuous. She did not object to my love, but wished me to renounce the Church and marry her. In spite of my infatuation for her, I could not make up my mind to such a step, and I went on seeing her and courting her in the hope that she would alter her decision.

The priest, who had at last confessed his admiration for my first sermon, asked me some time afterwards to prepare another for St. Joseph's Day, with an invitation to deliver it on the 19th of March, 1741. I composed it, and the abbé spoke of it with enthusiasm, but fate had decided that I should never preach but once in my life. It is a sad tale, unfortunately for me very true, which some persons are cruel enough to consider very amusing.

Young and rather self-conceited, I fancied that it was not necessary for me to spend much time in committing my sermon to memory. Being the author, I had all the ideas contained in my work classified in my mind, and it did not seem to me within the range of possibilities that I could forget what I had written. Perhaps I might not remember the exact words of a sentence, but I was at liberty to replace them by other expressions as good, and, as I never happened to be at a loss or to be struck dumb when I spoke in society, it was not likely that such an untoward accident would befall me before an audience amongst whom I did not know anyone who could intimidate me and cause me suddenly to lose the faculty of reason or of speech. I therefore followed my fancy, as usual, being satisfied with reading my sermon morning and evening, in order to impress it upon my memory, which until then had never betrayed me.

The 19th of March came, and on that eventful day at four o'clock in the afternoon I was to ascend the pulpit; but, believing myself quite

secure and thoroughly master of my subject, I had not the moral courage to deny myself the pleasure of dining with Count Mont Réal, who was then residing with me and who had invited the patrician Barozzi, engaged to be married to his daughter after the Easter holidays.

I was still enjoying myself with my fine company when the sexton of the church came in to tell me that they were waiting for me in the vestry. With a full stomach and my head rather heated, I took my leave, ran to the church and entered the pulpit. I went through the exordium with credit to myself, and I took breathing time; but scarcely had I pronounced the first sentences of the narration when I forgot what I had to say, and, in my endeavours to proceed, I fairly wandered from my subject and lost myself entirely. I was still more discomfited by a half-repressed murmur of the audience, as my deficiency appeared evident. Several persons left the church, others began to smile, I lost all presence of mind and every hope of getting out of the scrape.

I could not say whether I feigned a fainting fit or whether I truly swooned; all I know is that I fell down on the floor of the pulpit, striking my head against the wall, with an inward prayer for annihilation.

Two of the parish clerks carried me to the vestry, and after a few moments, without addressing a word to anyone, I took my cloak and hat and went home to lock myself in my room. I immediately dressed myself in a short coat, after the fashion of travelling priests, packed a few things in a trunk, obtained some money from my grandmother and took my departure for Padua, where I intended to pass my third examination. I reached Padua at midnight and went to Doctor Gozzi's house, but I did not feel the slightest temptation to mention to him my unlucky adventure.

I remained in Padua long enough to prepare myself for the doctor's degree, which I intended to take the following year, and after Easter I returned to Venice, where my misfortune was already forgotten; but preaching was out of the question, and, when any attempt was made to induce me to renew my efforts, I manfully kept to my determination never to ascend the pulpit again.

On the eve of Ascension Day M. Manzoni introduced me to a young courtesan who was at that time in great repute at Venice and was nicknamed Cavamacchia, because her father had been a scourer. This named vexed her a great deal; she wished to be called Preati, which was her family name, but it was all in vain, and the only concession her friends would make was to call her by her Christian name of Juliette. She had been introduced to fashionable notice by the Marquis de Sanvitali, a nobleman from Parma, who had given her one hundred thousand ducats for her favours. Her beauty was then the talk of everybody in Venice, and it was fashionable to call upon her. To converse with her and especially to be admitted into her circle was considered a great boon. As I shall have to mention her several times in the course

of my history, my readers will, I trust, allow me to enter into some particulars about her previous life.

Juliette was only fourteen years of age when her father sent her one day to the house of a Venetian nobleman, Marco Muazzo, with a coat which he had cleaned for him. He thought her very beautiful, in spite of the dirty rags in which she was dressed; he called to see her at her father's shop with a friend of his, the celebrated advocate Bastien Uccelli, who, struck by the romantic and cheerful nature of Juliette still more than by her beauty and fine figure, gave her an apartment, made her study music and kept her as his mistress. At the time of the fair Bastien took her with him to various public places of resort; everywhere she attracted general attention and secured the admiration of every lover of the sex. She made rapid progress in music and at the end of six months felt sufficient confidence in herself to sign an engagement with a theatrical manager, who took her to Vienna to give her a *castrato* part in one of Metastasio's operas.

The advocate had previously ceded her to a wealthy Jew, who, after giving her splendid diamonds, left her also.

In Vienna Juliette appeared on the stage, and her beauty gained for her an admiration which she would never have conquered by her very inferior talent. But the constant crowd of adorers who went to worship the goddess having sounded her exploits rather too loudly, the august Maria Theresa objected to this new creed being sanctioned in her capital, and the beautiful actress received an order to quit Vienna forthwith.

Count Spada offered her his protection and brought her back to Venice, but she soon left for Padua, where she had an engagement. In that city she kindled the fire of love in the breast of Marquis de Sanvitali, but, the marchioness having caught her once in her own box and Juliette having acted disrespectfully to her, she slapped her face, and, the affair having caused a good deal of noise, Juliette gave up the stage altogether. She came back to Venice, where, made conspicuous by her banishment from Vienna, she could not fail to make her fortune. Expulsion from Vienna for this class of women had become a title to fashionable favour, and, when there was a wish to depreciate a singer or a dancer, it was said of her that she had not been sufficiently prized to be expelled from Vienna.

After her return her first lover was Steffano Querini de Papozzes, but in the spring of 1740 the Marquis de Sanvitali came to Venice and soon carried her off. It was indeed difficult to resist this delightful marquis! His first present to the fair lady was a sum of one hundred thousand ducats, and, to prevent his being accused of weakness or lavish prodigality, he loudly proclaimed that the present could scarcely make up for the insult Juliette had received from his wife—an insult, however, which the courtesan never admitted, as she felt that there would be humiliation in such an acknowledgment, and she always professed to admire with gratitude her lover's generosity. She was right; the admission of the blow received would have left a stain upon her

charms, and how much more to her taste to allow those charms to be prized at such a high figure!

It was in the year 1741 that M. Manzoni introduced me to this new Phryne as a young ecclesiastic who was beginning to make a reputation. I found her surrounded by seven or eight well seasoned admirers, who were burning at her feet the incense of their flattery. She was carelessly reclining on a sofa near Querini. I was much struck with her appearance. She eyed me from head to foot, as if I had been exposed for sale, and, telling me, with the air of a princess, that she was not sorry to make my acquaintance, she invited me to take a seat. I began then in my turn to examine her closely and deliberately, and it was an easy matter, as the room, although small, was lighted with at least twenty wax candles.

Juliette was then in her eighteenth year; the freshness of her complexion was dazzling, but the carnation tint of her cheeks, the vermillion of her lips and the dark, very narrow curve of her eyebrows impressed me as being produced by art rather than nature. Her teeth—two rows of magnificent pearls—made one overlook the fact that her mouth was somewhat too large, and, whether from habit or because she could not help it, she seemed to be ever smiling. Her bosom, hid under a light gauze, invited the desires of love; yet I did not surrender to her charms. Her bracelets and the rings which covered her fingers did not prevent me from noticing that her hand was too large and too fleshy, and, in spite of her carefully hiding her feet, I judged by a tell-tale slipper lying close by her dress that they were well proportioned to the height of her figure—a proportion which is unpleasant not only to the Chinese and Spaniards, but likewise to every man of refined taste. We want a tall woman to have a small foot, and certainly it is not a modern taste, for Holofernes of old was of the same opinion; otherwise he would not have thought Judith so charming: *et sandalia ejus rapuerunt oculos ejus*. Altogether I found her beautiful, but, when I compared her beauty and the price of one hundred thousand ducats paid for it, I marvelled at my remaining so cold and at my not being tempted to give even one sequin for the privilege of making from nature a study of the charms which her dress concealed from my eyes.

I had scarcely been there a quarter of an hour when the noise made by the oars of a gondola striking the water heralded the prodigal marquis. We all rose from our seats, and M. Querini hastened, somewhat blushing, to quit his place on the sofa. M. de Sanvitali, a man of middle age, who had travelled much, took a seat near Juliette, but not on the sofa, so she was compelled to turn round. It gave me the opportunity of seeing her full front, while I had before only a side view of her face.

After my introduction to Juliette I paid her four or five visits and thought myself justified by the care I had given to the examination of her beauty in saying in M. de Malipiero's drawing-room one evening, when my opinion about her was asked, that she could please only a glutton with depraved tastes, that she had neither the fascination of

simple nature nor any knowledge of society, that she was deficient in well bred, easy manners, as well as in striking talents, and that those were the qualities which a thorough gentleman liked to find in a woman. This opinion met the general approbation of his friends, but M. de Malipiero kindly whispered to me that Juliette would certainly be informed of the portrait I had drawn of her and that she would become my sworn enemy. He had guessed rightly.

I thought Juliette very singular, for she seldom spoke to me, and, whenever she looked at me, she made use of an eyeglass, or she contracted her eyelids, as if she wished to deny me the honour of seeing her eyes, which were beyond all dispute very beautiful. They were blue, wondrously large and full and tinted with that unfathomable variegated iris which nature gives only to youth and which generally disappears, after having worked miracles, when the owner reaches the shady side of forty. Frederick the Great preserved it until his death.

Juliette was informed of the portrait I had given of her to M. de Malipiero's friends by the indiscreet pensioner, Xavier Cortantini. One evening I called upon her with M. Manzoni, and she told him that a wonderful judge of beauty had found flaws in hers, but she took good care not to specify them. It was not difficult to make out that she was indirectly firing at me, and I prepared myself for the ostracism which I was expecting, but which, however, she kept in abeyance for fully an hour. At last, our conversation falling upon a concert given a few days before by Imer, the actor, and in which his daughter, Thérèse, had taken a brilliant part, Juliette turned round to me and inquired what M. de Malipiero did for Thérèse. I said that he was educating her. "He can well do it," she answered, "for he is a man of talent; but I should like to know what he can do with you?"

"Whatever he can."

"I am told that he thinks you rather stupid."

As a matter of course, she had the laugh on her side, and I, confused, uncomfortable and not knowing what to say, took leave after having cut a very sorry figure and determined never again to darken her door. The next day at dinner the account of my adventure caused much amusement to the old senator.

Throughout the summer I carried on a course of platonic love with my charming Angela at the house of her teacher of embroidery, but her extreme reserve excited me, and my love had almost become a torment to myself. With my ardent nature, I required a mistress like Bettina, who knew how to satisfy my love without wearing it out. I still retained some feelings of purity and entertained the deepest veneration for Angela. She was in my eyes the very palladium of Cecrops. Still very innocent, I felt some disinclination towards women and was simple enough to be jealous of even their husbands.

Angela would not grant me the slightest favour, yet she was no flirt; but the fire burning in me parched and withered me. The pathetic entreaties which I poured out of my heart had less effect upon her than upon two young sisters, her companions and friends; had I not

concentrated every look of mine upon the heartless girl, I might have discovered that her friends excelled her in beauty and in feeling, but my prejudiced eyes saw no one but Angela. To every outpouring of my love she answered that she was quite ready to become my wife and that such was to be the limit of my wishes; when she condescended to add that she suffered as much as I did myself, she thought she had bestowed upon me the greatest of favours.

Such was the state of my mind when in the first days of autumn I received a letter from the Countess de Mont Réal with an invitation to spend some time at her beautiful estate at Paséan. She expected many guests and among them her own daughter, who had married a Venetian nobleman and had a great reputation for wit and beauty, although she had but one eye, but it was so beautiful that it made up for the loss of the other. I accepted the invitation, and, Paséan offering me a constant round of pleasures, it was easy enough for me to enjoy myself and forget for the time the rigours of the cruel Angela.

I was given a pretty room on the ground floor, opening upon the gardens of Paséan, and I enjoyed its comfort without caring to know who my neighbours were. The morning after my arrival, at the very moment I awoke, my eyes were delighted with the sight of the charming creature who brought me my coffee. She was a very young girl, but as well formed as a young person of seventeen; yet she had scarcely completed her fourteenth year. The snow of her complexion, her hair as dark as the raven's wing, her black eyes beaming with fire and innocence, her dress composed only of a chemise and a short petticoat which exposed a well turned leg and the prettiest tiny foot—every detail I gathered in one instant presented to my looks the most original and most perfect beauty I had ever beheld. I looked at her with the greatest pleasure, and her eyes rested upon me as if we had been old acquaintances.

"How did you find your bed?" she asked.

"Very comfortable; I am sure you made it. Pray, who are you?"

"I am Lucie, the daughter of the gatekeeper; I have neither brothers nor sisters and am fourteen years old. I am very glad you have no servant with you; I will be your little maid, and I am sure you will be pleased with me."

Delighted at this beginning, I sat up in my bed, and she helped me to put on my dressing-gown, saying a hundred things which I did not understand. I began to drink my coffee, quite amazed at her easy freedom and struck with her beauty, to which it would have been impossible to remain indifferent. She had seated herself on my bed, giving no other apology for that liberty than the most delightful smile.

I was still sipping my coffee when Lucie's parents came into my room. She did not move from her place on the bed, but looked at them, appearing very proud of such a seat. The good people kindly scolded her, begged my forgiveness in her favour, and Lucie left the room to attend to her other duties. The moment she had gone, her father and mother began to praise their daughter.

"She is our only child," they said, "our darling pet, the hope of our old age. She loves and obeys us and fears God; she is as clean as a new pin and has but one fault."

"What is that?"

"She is too young."

"That is a charming fault, which time will mend."

I was not long in ascertaining that they were living specimens of honesty, truth, homely virtues and real happiness. I was delighted at this discovery, when Lucie returned as gay as a lark, prettily dressed, her hair done in a peculiar way of her own and with well fitting shoes. She dropped a simple curtsey before me, gave a couple of hearty kisses to both her parents and jumped on her father's lap. I asked her to come and sit on my bed, but she answered that she could not take such a liberty now that she was dressed. The simplicity, artlessness and innocence of the answer seemed to me very enchanting and brought a smile on my lips. I looked at her closely to see whether she was prettier in her new dress or in the morning's *négligé* and decided in favour of the latter. To speak the truth, Lucie was, I thought, superior in everything, not only to Angela, but even to Bettina.

The hairdresser made his appearance, and the honest family left my room. When I was dressed, I went to meet the countess and her amiable daughter. The day passed off very pleasantly, as is generally the case in the country when you are amongst agreeable people.

In the morning, the moment my eyes were opened, I rang the bell, and pretty Lucie came in, simple and natural as before, with her easy manners and wonderful remarks. Her candour, her innocence shone brilliantly all over her person. I could not conceive how, with her goodness, her virtue and her intelligence, she could run the risk of exciting me by coming into my room alone and with so much familiarity. I fancied that she would not attach much importance to certain slight liberties and would not prove over-scrupulous, and with that idea I made up my mind to show her that I fully understood her. I felt no remorse of conscience on the score of her parents, who, in my estimation, were as careless as herself; I had no dread of being the first to give the alarm to her innocence or to enlighten her mind with the gloomy light of malice, but, unwilling either to be the dupe of feeling or to act against it, I resolved to reconnoitre the ground. I extend a daring hand towards her person; by an involuntary movement she withdraws, blushes, her cheerfulness disappears, and, turning her head aside as if she were in search of something, she waits until her agitation has subsided. The whole affair had not lasted one minute. She came back, abashed at the idea that she had proved herself rather knowing and at the dread of having perhaps given a wrong interpretation to an action which might have been on my part perfectly innocent or the result of politeness. Her natural laugh soon returned, and, having rapidly read in her mind all I have just described, I lost no time in restoring her confidence, and, judging that I would venture too much by active operations, I resolved to employ

the following morning in a friendly chat, during which I could make her out better.

In pursuance of that plan, the next morning, as we were talking, I told her that it was cold, but that she would not feel it if she would lie down near me.

"Shall I disturb you?" she said.

"No, but I am thinking that, if your mother happened to come in, she would be angry."

"Mother would not think of any harm."

"Come, then. But, Lucie, do you know what danger you are exposing yourself to?"

"Certainly I do; but you are good, and, what is more, you are a priest."

"Come; only lock the door."

"No, no, for people might think . . . I do not know what." She lay down close by me and kept on with her chatting, although I did not understand a word of what she said, for in that singular position and unwilling to give way to my ardent desires, I remained as still as a log.

Her confidence in her safety, confidence which was certainly not feigned, worked upon my feelings to such an extent that I would have been ashamed to take any advantage of it. At last she told me that nine o'clock had struck and that if old Count Antonio found us as we were, he would tease her with his jokes. "When I see that man," she said, "I am afraid and I run away." Saying these words, she rose from the bed and left the room.

I remained motionless for a long while, stupefied, benumbed and mastered by the agitation of my excited senses, as well as by my thoughts. The next morning, as I wished to keep calm, I only let her sit down on my bed, and the conversation I had with her proved without the shadow of a doubt that her parents had every reason to idolise her and that the easy freedom of her mind, as well as of her behaviour with me, was entirely owing to her innocence and purity. Her artlessness, her vivacity, her eager curiosity and the bashful blushes which spread over her face whenever her innocent or jesting remarks caused me to laugh—everything, in fact, convinced me that she was an angel, destined to become the victim of the first libertine who would undertake to seduce her. I felt sufficient control over my own feelings to resist any attempt against her virtue which my conscience might afterwards reproach me with. The mere thought of taking advantage of her innocence made me shudder, and my self-esteem was a guarantee to her parents (who abandoned her to me on the strength of the good opinion they entertained of me) that Lucie's honour was safe in my hands. I thought I would have despised myself if I had betrayed the trust they reposed in me. I therefore determined to conquer my feelings, and, with perfect confidence in the victory, I made up my mind to wage war against myself and to be satisfied with her presence as the only reward of my heroic efforts. I was not

yet acquainted with the axiom that "as long as the fighting lasts, victory remains uncertain."

As I enjoyed her conversation much, a natural instinct prompted me to tell her that she would afford me great pleasure if she could come earlier in the morning and even wake me up if I happened to be asleep, adding, in order to give more weight to my request, that, the less I slept, the better I felt in health. In this manner I contrived to spend three hours instead of two in her society, although this cunning contrivance of mine did not prevent the hours flying, at least in my opinion, as swift as lightning.

Her mother would often come in as we were talking, and, when the good woman found her sitting on my bed, she would say nothing, only wondering at my kindness. Lucie would then cover her with kisses, and the kind old soul would entreat me to give her child lessons of goodness and to cultivate her mind; but, when she had left us, Lucie did not think herself under less restraint, and, whether in or out of her mother's presence, she was always the same without the slightest change.

If the society of this angelic child afforded me the sweetest delight, it also caused me the most cruel suffering. Often, very often, when her face was close to my lips, I felt the most ardent temptation to smother her with kisses, and my blood was at fever heat when she wished that she had been a sister of mine. But I kept sufficient command over myself to avoid the slightest contact, for I was conscious that even one kiss would have been the spark which would have blown up all the edifice of my reserve. Every time she left me, I remained astounded at my own victory, but, always eager to win fresh laurels, I longed for the following morning, panting for a renewal of this sweet yet very dangerous contest.

At the end of ten or twelve days, I felt that there was no alternative but to put a stop to this state of things or to become a monster in my own eyes; and I decided for the moral side of the question all the more easily that nothing insured me success if I chose the second alternative. The moment I placed her under the obligation to defend herself, Lucie would become a heroine, and, the door of my room being open, I might have been exposed to shame and to a very useless repentance. This rather frightened me. Yet, to put an end to my torture, I did not know what to decide. I could no longer resist the effect made upon my senses by this beautiful girl, who, at the break of day and scantily dressed, ran gaily into my room, came to my bed inquiring how I had slept, bent her head familiarly towards me and, so to speak, dropped her words on my lips. In those dangerous moments I would turn my head aside; but in her innocence she would reproach me for being afraid when she felt herself so safe, and, if I answered that I could not possibly fear a child, she would reply that a difference of two years was of no account.

Standing at bay, exhausted, conscious that every instant increased the ardour which was devouring me, I resolved to entreat from her-

self the discontinuance of her visits, and this resolution appeared to me sublime and infallible; but, having postponed its execution until the following morning, I passed a dreadful night, tortured for the last time. I fancied that Lucie would not only grant my prayer, but would conceive for me the highest esteem. In the morning—it was barely daylight—Lucie, beaming, radiant with beauty, a happy smile brightening her pretty mouth, and her splendid hair in the most fascinating disorder, bursts into my room, and rushes with open arms towards my bed; but, when she sees my pale, dejected, and unhappy countenance, she stops short, and, her beautiful face taking an expression of sadness and anxiety, “What ails you?” she asks, with deep sympathy.

“I have had no sleep through the night.”

“And why?”

“Because I have made up my mind to impart to you a project which, although fraught with misery to myself, will at least secure me your esteem.”

“But, if your project is to ensure my esteem, it ought to make you very cheerful. Only tell me, reverend sir, why, after calling me *thou* yesterday, you treat me to-day respectfully, like a lady? What have I done? I will get your coffee, and you must tell me everything after you have drunk it; I long to hear you.”

She goes and returns, I drink the coffee, and, seeing that my countenance remains grave, she tries to enliven me, contrives to make me smile and claps her hands for joy. After putting everything in order, she closes the door because the wind is high and, in her anxiety not to lose one word of what I have to say, entreats artlessly a little place near me. I cannot refuse her, for I feel almost lifeless.

I then begin a faithful recital of the fearful state in which her beauty has thrown me and a vivid picture of all the suffering I have experienced in trying to master my ardent wish to give her some proof of my love; I explain to her that, unable to endure such torture any longer, I see no other safety but in entreating her not to see me any more. The importance of the subject, the truth of my love, my wish to present my expedient in the light of the heroic effort of a deep and virtuous passion lend me a peculiar eloquence. I endeavour above all to make her realise the fearful consequences which might follow a course different to the one I was proposing and how miserable we might be.

At the close of my long discourse Lucie, seeing my eyes wet with tears, throws off the bedclothes to wipe them, without thinking that in so doing she uncovers two globes, the beauty of which might have caused the wreck of the most experienced pilot. After a short silence, the charming child tells me that my tears make her very unhappy and that she had never supposed that she could cause them.

“All you have just told me,” she added, “proves the sincerity of your great love for me, but I cannot imagine why you should be in such dread of a feeling which affords me the most intense pleasure.

You wish to banish me from your presence because you stand in fear of your love, but what would you do if you hated me? Am I guilty because I have pleased you? If it is a crime to have won your affection, I can assure you that I did not think I was committing a criminal action, and therefore you cannot conscientiously punish me. Yet I cannot conceal the truth; I am very happy to be loved by you. As for the danger we run when we love, danger which I can understand, we can set it at defiance if we choose, and I wonder at my not fearing it, ignorant as I am, while you, a learned man, think it so terrible. I am astonished that love, which is not a disease, should have made you ill and that it should have exactly the opposite effect upon me. Is it possible that I am mistaken and that my feeling towards you may not be love? You saw me very cheerful when I came in this morning; it is because I have been dreaming all night, but my dreams did not keep me awake; only several times I woke up to ascertain whether my dream was true, for I thought I was near you; and every time, finding that it was not so, I quickly went to sleep again in the hope of continuing my happy dream, and every time I succeeded. After such a night, was it not natural for me to be cheerful this morning? My dear abbé, if love is a torment for you, I am very sorry, but would it be possible for you to live without love? I will do anything you order me to do, but, even if your cure depended upon it, I would not cease to love you, for that would be impossible. Yet, if to heal your sufferings it should be necessary for you to love me no more, you must do your utmost to succeed, for I would much rather see you alive without love, than dead for having loved too much. Only try to find some other plan, for the one you have proposed makes me very miserable. Think it over; there may be some other way which will be less painful. Suggest one more practicable and depend upon Lucie's obedience."

These words, so true, so artless, so innocent, made me realise the immense superiority of nature's eloquence over that of philosophical intellect. For the first time I folded this angelic being in my arms, exclaiming, "Yes, dearest Lucie, yes, thou hast it in thy power to afford the sweetest relief to my devouring pain; abandon to my ardent kisses thy divine lips, which have just assured me of thy love."

An hour passed in the most delightful silence, which nothing interrupted except these words murmured now and then by Lucie, "Oh, God! is it true? Is it not a dream?" Yet I respected her innocence, and the more readily because she abandoned herself entirely and without the slightest resistance. At last, extricating herself gently from my arms, she said, with some uneasiness, "My heart begins to speak, I must go," and instantly rose. Having somewhat rearranged her dress she sat down, and her mother, coming in at that moment, complimented me upon my good looks and my bright countenance and told Lucie to dress herself to attend mass. Lucie came back an hour later and expressed her joy and her pride at the wonderful cure she thought she had performed upon me, for the healthy appearance I was then

showing convinced her of my love much better than the pitiful state in which she had found me in the morning. "If your complete happiness rests in my power," she added, "be happy; there is nothing that I can refuse you."

The moment she left me, still wavering between happiness and fear, I understood that I was standing on the very brink of the abyss and that nothing but a most extraordinary determination could prevent me from falling headlong into it.

I remained at Paséan until the end of September, and the last eleven nights of my stay were passed in the undisturbed possession of Lucie, who, secure in her mother's profound sleep, came to my room to enjoy in my arms the most delicious hours. The burning ardour of my love was increased by the abstinence to which I condemned myself, although Lucie did everything in her power to make me break through my determination. She could not fully enjoy the sweetness of the forbidden fruit unless I plucked it without reserve, and the effect produced by our constantly lying in each other's arms was too strong for a young girl to resist. She tried everything she could do to deceive me and make me believe that I had already and in reality gathered the whole flower, but Bettina's lessons had been too efficient to allow me to go on a wrong scent, and I reached the end of my stay without yielding entirely to the temptation she so fondly threw in my way. I promised her to return in the spring; our farewell was tender and very sad, and I left her in a state of mind and of body which must have been the cause of her misfortunes—which, twenty years after, I had occasion to reproach myself with in Holland and which will ever remain upon my conscience.

A few days after my return to Venice, I had fallen back into all my old habits and resumed my courtship of Angela, in the hope that I would obtain from her at least as much as Lucie had granted to me. A certain dread which to-day I can no longer trace in my nature, a sort of terror of the consequences, which might have a blighting influence upon my future, prevented me from giving myself up to complete enjoyment. I do not know whether I have ever been a truly honourable man, but I am fully aware that the feelings I fostered in my youth were by far more upright than those I have, as I lived on, forced myself to accept. A wicked philosophy throws down too many of those barriers which we call prejudices.

The two sisters who were sharing Angela's embroidery lessons were her intimate friends and the confidantes of all her secrets. I made their acquaintance and found that they disapproved of her extreme reserve towards me. As I usually saw them with Angela and knew their intimacy with her, I would, when I happened to meet them alone, tell them all my sorrows, and, thinking only of my cruel sweetheart, I never was concealed enough to suppose that these young girls might fall in love with me; but I often ventured to speak to them with all the blazing inspiration which was burning in me—as a liberty I would not have dared to take in the presence of her whom

I loved. True love always begets reserve; we fear to be accused of exaggeration if we should give utterance to feelings inspired by passion, and the modest lover, in his dread of saying too much, very often says too little.

The teacher of embroidery, an old bigot, who at first appeared not to mind the attachment I showed for Angela, got tired at last of my too frequent visits and mentioned them to the abbé, the uncle of my fair lady. He told me kindly one day that I ought not to call at that house so often, as my constant visits might be wrongly construed and prove detrimental to the reputation of his niece. His words fell upon me like a thunderbolt, but I mastered my feelings sufficiently to leave him without incurring any suspicion, and I promised to follow his good advice.

Three or four days afterwards I paid a visit to the teacher of embroidery, and, to make her believe that my visit was intended only for her, I did not stop one instant near the young girls; yet I contrived to slip into the hand of the elder of the two sisters a note enclosing another for my dear Angela, in which I explained why I had been compelled to discontinue my visits, entreating her to devise some means by which I could enjoy the happiness of seeing her and of conversing with her. In my note to Nanette, I only begged her to give my letter to her friend, adding that I would see them again the day after the morrow and that I trusted to her to find an opportunity for delivering me the answer. She managed it all very cleverly, and, when I renewed my visit two days afterwards, she gave me a letter without attracting the attention of anyone.

Nanette's letter enclosed a very short note from Angela, who, disliking letter-writing, merely advised me to follow, if I could, the plan proposed by her friend. Her is the copy of the letter written by Nanette, which I have always kept, as well as all other letters which I give in these *Memoirs*:

"There is nothing in the world, reverend sir, that I would not readily do for my friend. She visits at our house every holiday, has supper with us and sleeps under our roof. I will suggest the best way for you to make the acquaintance of Madame Orio, our aunt; but, if you obtain an introduction to her, you must be very careful not to let her suspect your preference for Angela, for our aunt would certainly object to her house being made a place of rendezvous to facilitate your interviews with a stranger to her family. Now for the plan I propose, and in the execution of which I will give you every assistance in my power. Madame Orio, although a woman of good station in life, is not wealthy, and she wishes to have her name entered on the list of noble widows who receive the bounties bestowed by the Confraternity of the Holy Sacrament, of which M. de Malipiero is president. Last Sunday Angela mentioned that you are in the good graces of that nobleman and that the best way to obtain his patronage would be to ask you to entreat it in her behalf. The foolish girl added that you were smitten with me, that all your visits to our mistress of embroidery were made for

my special benefit and for the sake of entertaining me and that I would find it a very easy task to interest you in her favour. My aunt answered that, as you are a priest, there was no fear of any harm, and she told me to write to you with an invitation to call on her; I refused. The procurator Rosa, who is a great favourite of my aunt's, was present; he approved of my refusal, saying that the letter ought to be written by her and not by me, that it was for my aunt to beg the honour of your visit on business of real importance and that, if there was any truth in the report of your love for me, you would not fail to come. My aunt, by his advice, has therefore written the letter which you will find at your house. If you wish to meet Angela, postpone your visit to us until next Sunday. Should you succeed in obtaining M. de Malipiero's good-will in favour of my aunt, you will become the pet of the household, but you must forgive me if I appear to treat you with coolness, for I have said that I do not like you. I would advise you to make love to my aunt, who is sixty years of age; M. Rosa will not be jealous, and you will become dear to everyone. For my part, I will manage for you an opportunity for some private conversation with Angela and will do anything to convince you of my friendship. Adieu."

This plan appeared to me very well conceived, and, having the same evening received Madame Orio's letter, I called upon her on the following day, Sunday. I was welcomed in a very friendly manner, and the lady, entreating me exert in her behalf my influence with M. de Malipiero, entrusted me with all the papers which I might require to succeed. I undertook to do my utmost, and I took care to address only a few words to Angela, but directed all my gallant attentions to Nanette, who treated me as coolly as could be. Finally I won the friendship of the old procurator Rosa, who in after days was of some service to me.

I had so much at stake in the success of Madame Orio's petition that I thought of nothing else, and, knowing all the power of the beautiful Thérèse Imer over our amorous senator, who would be but too happy to please her in anything, I determined to call upon her the next day and went straight to her room without being announced. I found her alone with the physician Doro, who, feigning to be on a professional visit, wrote a prescription, felt her pulse and went off. This Doro was suspected of being in love with Thérèse; M. de Malipiero, who was jealous, had forbidden Thérèse to receive his visits, and she had promised to obey him. She knew that I was acquainted with those circumstances, and my presence was evidently unpleasant to her, for she had certainly no wish that the old man should hear how she kept her promises. I thought that no better opportunity could be found of obtaining from her everything I wished.

I told her in a few words of the object of my visit and took care to add that she could rely upon my discretion and that I would not for the world do her any injury. Thérèse, grateful for this assurance, answered that she rejoiced at finding an occasion to oblige me and,

asking me to give her the papers of my *protégée*, showed me the certificates and testimonials of another lady in favour of whom she had undertaken to speak and whom she said she would sacrifice to the person in whose behalf I felt interested. She kept her word, for the very next day she placed in my hands the brevet, signed by His Excellency as president of the Confraternity. For the present, and with the expectation of further favours, Madame Orio's name was put down to share the bounties which were distributed twice a year.

Nanette and her sister Marton were the orphan daughters of a sister of Madame Orio. All the fortune of the good lady consisted in the house which was her dwelling, the first floor being let, and in a pension given to her by her brother, member of the Council of Ten. She lived alone with her two charming nieces, the eldest sixteen and the youngest fifteen years of age. She kept no servant and employed only an old woman, who for one crown a month fetched water and did the rough work. Her only friend was the procurator Rosa; he had, like her, reached his sixtieth year and expected to marry her as soon as he should become a widower.

The two sisters slept together on the third floor in a large bed, which was likewise shared by Angela every Sunday.

As soon as I found myself in possession of the deed for Madame Orio, I hastened to pay a visit to the mistress of embroidery, in order to find an opportunity of acquainting Nanette with my success, and in a short note which I prepared I informed her that in two days I would call to give the brevet to Madame Orio, and I begged her earnestly not to forget her promise to contrive a private interview with my dear Angela.

When I arrived on the appointed day at Madame Orio's house, Nanette, who had watched for my coming, dexterously conveyed to my hand a billet, requesting me to find a moment to read it before leaving the house. I found Madame Orio, Angela, the old procurator and Marton in the room. Longing to read the note, I refused the seat offered to me and, presenting to Madame Orio the deed she had so long desired, asked as my only reward the pleasure of kissing her hand, giving her to understand that I wanted to leave the room immediately.

"Oh, my dear abbé!" said the lady, "you shall have a kiss, but not on my hand, and no one can object to it, as I am thirty years older than you."

She might have said *forty-five* without going much astray. I gave her two kisses, which evidently satisfied her, for she desired me to perform the same ceremony with her nieces, but they both ran away, and Angela alone stood the brunt of my hardihood. After this the widow asked me to sit down.

"I cannot, madame."

"Why, I beg?"

"I have—"

"I understand. Nanette, show the way."

"Dear aunt, excuse me."

"Well, then, Marton—"

"Oh, dear aunt, why do you not insist upon my sister obeying your orders?"

"Alas! madame, these young ladies are quite right. Allow me to retire."

"No, my dear abbé, my nieces are very foolish; M. Rosa, I am sure, will kindly—"

The good procurator takes me affectionately by the hand and leads me to the third story, where he leaves me. The moment I am alone, I open my letter, and I read the following:

"My aunt will invite you to supper; do not accept. Go away as soon as we sit down to table, and Marton will escort you as far as the street door, but do not leave the house. When the street door is closed again, everyone thinking you are gone, go upstairs in the dark as far as the third floor, where you must wait for us. We will come up the moment M. Rosa has left the house and our aunt has gone to bed. Angela will be at liberty to grant you throughout the night a *tête-à-tête* which, I trust, will prove a happy one."

Oh, what joy, what gratitude for the lucky chance which allowed me to read this letter on the very spot where I was to await the dear object of my love! Certain of finding a way without the slightest difficulty, I returned to Madame Orio's sitting-room, overwhelmed with happiness.

CHAPTER 5

ON my reappearance Madame Orio told me, with many heartfelt thanks, that I must for the future consider myself as a privileged and welcome friend, and the evening passed off very pleasantly. As the hour for supper drew near, I excused myself so well that Madame Orio could not insist upon my accepting her invitation to stay. Marton rose to light me out of the room, but her aunt, believing Nanette to be my favourite, gave her such an imperative order to accompany me that she was compelled to obey. She went down the stairs rapidly, opened and closed the street door very noisily and, putting her light out, re-entered the sitting-room, leaving me in darkness. I went upstairs softly; when I reached the third landing, I found the chamber of the two sisters and, throwing myself upon a sofa, waited patiently for the rising of the star of my happiness. An hour passed amidst the sweetest dreams of my imagination; at last I hear the noise of the door opening and closing, and a few minutes after the two sisters come in with my Angela. I draw her towards me and, caring for nobody else, keep up for two full hours my conversation with her. The clock strikes midnight; I am pitied for having gone so late supperless, but I am shocked at such an idea; I answer that, with such happiness as I am enjoying, I can suffer from no human want. I am told that I

am a prisoner, that the key of the house door is under the aunt's pillow and that it is opened only by herself as she goes in the morning to the first mass. I wonder at my young friends imagining that such news can be anything but delightful to me. I express all my joy at the certainty of passing the next five hours with the beloved mistress of my heart. Another hour is spent, when suddenly Nanette begins to laugh, Angela wants to know the reason, and, Marton whispering a few words to her, they both laugh likewise. This puzzles me. In my turn I want to know what causes this general laughter, and at last Nanette, putting on an air of anxiety, tells me that they have no more candle and that in a few minutes we shall be in the dark. This is a piece of news particularly agreeable to me, but I do not let my satisfaction appear on my countenance, and, saying how truly sorry I am for their sake, I propose that they should go to bed and sleep quietly under my respectful guardianship. My proposal increases their merriment.

"What can we do in the dark?"

"We can talk."

We were four; for the last three hours we had been talking, and I was the hero of the romance. Love is a great poet, its resources are inexhaustible, but, if the end it has in view is not obtained, it feels weary and remains silent. My Angela listened willingly, but, little disposed to talk herself, she seldom answered, and she displayed good sense rather than wit. To weaken the force of my arguments, she was often satisfied with hurling at me a proverb, somewhat in the fashion of the Romans throwing the catapult. Every time that my poor hands came to the assistance of love, she drew herself back or repulsed me. Yet, in spite of all, I went on talking and using my hands without losing courage, but I gave myself up to despair when I found that my rather artful arguing astounded her without bringing conviction to her heart, which was only disquieted, never softened. On the other hand, I could see with astonishment upon their countenances the impression made upon the two sisters by the ardent speeches I poured out to Angela. This metaphysical curve struck me as unnatural, it ought to have been an angle; I was then, unhappily for myself, studying geometry. I was in such a state that, notwithstanding the cold, I was perspiring profusely. At last the light was nearly out, and Nanette took it away.

The moment we were in the dark, I very naturally extended my arms to seize her whom I loved; but I met only with empty space and could not help laughing at the rapidity with which Angela had availed herself of the opportunity of escaping me. For one full hour I poured out all the tender, cheerful words that love inspired me with, to persuade her to come back to me; I could only suppose that it was a joke to tease me. But I became impatient.

"The joke has lasted long enough," I said, "it is foolish, as I could not run after you, and I am surprised to hear you laugh, for your strange conduct leads me to suppose that you are making fun of me.

Come and take your seat near me, and, if I must speak to you without seeing you, let my hands assure me that I am not addressing my words to the empty air. To continue this game would be an insult to me, and my love does not deserve such a return."

"Well, be calm. I will listen to every word you may say, but you must feel that it would not be decent for me to place myself near you in this dark room."

"Do you want me to stand where I am until morning?"

"Lie down on the bed and go to sleep."

"I wonder, indeed, at your thinking me capable of doing so in the state I am in. Well, I suppose we must play at blindman's buff."

Thereupon I began to feel right and left, everywhere, but in vain. Whenever I caught anyone, it always turned out to be Nanette or Marton, who at once disclosed themselves, and I, stupid Don Quixote, instantly would let them go! Love and prejudice blinded me; I could not see how ridiculous I was with my respectful reserve. I had not yet read the anecdotes of Louis XIII, King of France, but I had read Boccaccio. I kept on seeking Angela in vain, reproaching her with her cruelty and entreating her to let me catch her; but she would only answer that the difficulty of meeting each other was mutual. The room was not large, and I was enraged at my want of success.

Tired and still more vexed, I sat down and for the next hour told the story of Roger, when Angelica disappears through the power of the magic ring which the loving knight had so imprudently given her:

*Così dicendo, intorno a la fortuna
Brancolando n'andava come cieco.
O quante volte abbraccio l'aria vana
Sperando la donzella abbracciar seco.*

Angela had not read Ariosto, but Nanette had done so several times. She undertook the defence of Angelica and blamed the simplicity of Roger, who, if he had been wise, would never have trusted the ring to a coquette. I was delighted with Nanette, but I was yet too much of a novice to apply her remarks to myself.

Only one more hour remained, and I was to leave before the break of day, for Madame Orio would have died rather than give way to the temptation of missing the early mass. During that hour I spoke to Angela, trying to convince her that she ought to come and sit by me. My soul went through every gradation of hope and despair, and the reader cannot possibly realise it unless he has been placed in a similar position. I exhausted the most convincing arguments; then I had recourse to prayers and even to tears; but, seeing all was useless, I gave way to that feeling of noble indignation which lends dignity to anger. Had I not been in the dark, I might, I truly believe, have struck the proud monster, the cruel girl who had thus for five hours condemned me to the most distressing suffering. I poured out all the abuse, all the insulting words that despised love can suggest to an infuriated mind; I loaded her with the deepest curses; I swore that

my love had entirely turned into hatred, and, as a *finale*, I advised her to be careful, as I would kill her the moment I should set eyes on her.

My invectives came to an end with the darkness. At the first break of day and as soon as I heard the noise made by the bolt and the key of the street door, which Madame Orio was opening to let herself out that she might seek in the church the repose of which her pious soul was in need, I got myself ready and looked for my cloak and hat. But how can I ever portray the consternation in which I was thrown when, casting a sly glance upon the young friends, I found the three bathed in tears? In my shame and despair, I thought of committing suicide, and, sitting down again, I recollected my brutal speeches and upbraided myself for having wantonly caused them to weep. I could not say one word, I felt choking; at last tears came to my assistance, and I gave way to a fit of crying which relieved me. Nanette then remarked that her aunt would soon return home; I dried my eyes and, not venturing another look at Angela or her friends, ran away without uttering a word and threw myself on my bed, where sleep would not visit my troubled mind.

At noon M. de Malipiero, noticing the change in my countenance, inquired what ailed me, and, longing to unburden my heart, I told him all that had happened. The wise old man did not laugh at my sorrow, but by his sensible advice managed to console me and give me courage. He was in the same predicament with the beautiful Thérèse. Yet he could not help giving way to his merriment when at dinner he saw me, in spite of my grief, eat with increased appetite; I had gone without my supper the night before; he complimented me upon my happy constitution.

I was determined never to visit Madame Orio's house, and on that very day I held an argument in metaphysics, in which I contended that any being of whom we had only an abstract idea could exist only abstractly; and I was right, but it was a very easy task to give to my thesis an irreligious turn, and I was obliged to recant. A few days afterwards I went to Padua, where I took my degree of doctor *utroque jure*.

When I returned to Venice, I received a note from M. Rosa, who entreated me to call upon Madame Orio; she wished to see me, and, feeling certain of not meeting Angela, I paid her a visit the same evening. The two graceful sisters were so kind, so pleasant, that they scattered to the winds the shame I felt at seeing them after the fearful night I had passed in their room two months before. The labours of writing my thesis and passing my examination were of course sufficient excuses for Madame Orio, who only wanted to reproach me for having remained so long away from her house.

As I left, Nanette gave me a letter containing a note from Angela, the contents of which ran as follows:

"If you are not afraid of passing another night with me, you shall have no reason to complain of me, for I love you and wish to hear

from your own lips whether you would still have loved me if I had consented to become contemptible in your eyes."

This is the letter of Nanette, who alone had her wits about her:

"M. Rosa having undertaken to bring you back to our house, I prepare these few lines to let you know that Angela is in despair at having lost you. I confess that the night you spent with us was a cruel one, but I do not think that you did rightly in giving up your visits to Madame Orio. If you still feel any love for Angela, I advise you to take your chance once more. Accept a rendezvous for another night; she may vindicate herself, and you will be happy. Believe me; come. Farewell."

Those two letters afforded me much gratification, for I had it in my power to enjoy my revenge by showing to Angela the coldest contempt. Therefore on the following Sunday I went to Madame Orio's house, having provided myself with a smoked tongue and a couple of bottles of Cyprus wine; but, to my great surprise, my cruel mistress was not there. Nanette told me that she had met her at church in the morning, and that she would not be able to come before supper-time. Trusting to that promise, I declined Madame Orio's invitation, and, before the family sat down to supper, I left her room as I had done on the former occasion and slipped upstairs. I longed to represent the character I had prepared myself for, and, feeling assured that Angela, even if she should prove less cruel, would grant me only insignificant favours, I despised them in anticipation and resolved to be avenged.

After waiting three-quarters of an hour, the street door was locked, and a moment later Nanette and Marton entered the room.

"Where is Angela?" I inquired.

"She must have been unable to come or to send a message. Yet she knows you are here."

"She thinks she has made a fool of me; but I suspected she would act in this way. You know her now. She is trifling with me, and very likely she is now revelling in her triumph. She has made use of you to lure me into the snare, and it is all the better for her; had she come, I meant to have my turn and to laugh at her."

"Ah! you must allow me to have my doubts as to that."

"Doubt me not, beautiful Nanette; the pleasant night we are going to spend without her must convince you."

"That is to say that, as a man of sense, you can accept us as a makeshift; but you can sleep here, and my sister can lie with me on the sofa in the next room."

"I cannot hinder you, but it would be great unkindness on your part. At all events, I do not intend to go to bed."

"What! you would have the courage to spend seven hours alone with us? Why, I am certain that in a short time you will be at a loss what to say, and you will fall asleep."

"Well, we shall see. In the meantime, here are provisions. You will not be so cruel as to let me eat alone? Can you get any bread?"

"Yes, and to please you we must have a second supper."

"I ought to be in love with you. Tell me, beautiful Nanette, if I were as much attached to you as I was to Angela, would you follow her example and make me unhappy?"

"How can you ask such a question? It is worthy of a conceited man. All I can answer is that I do not know what I would do."

They laid the cloth, brought some bread, some Parmesan cheese and water, laughing all the while, and then we went to work. The wine, to which they were not accustomed, went to their heads, and their gaiety was soon delightful. I wondered, as I looked at them, at my having been blind enough not to see their merit.

After our supper, which was delicious, I sat between them, holding their hands, which I pressed to my lips, asking them whether they were truly my friends and whether they approved of Angela's conduct towards me. They both answered that it had made them shed many tears. "Then let me have for you the tender feelings of a brother," I said, "and share those feelings yourselves as if you were my sisters; let us exchange, in all innocence, proofs of our mutual affection and swear to each other an eternal fidelity."

The first kiss I gave them was prompted by entirely harmless motives, and they returned the kiss, as they assured me a few days afterwards, only to prove to me that they reciprocated my brotherly feelings; but those innocent kisses, as we repeated them, very soon became ardent ones and kindled a flame which certainly took us by surprise, for we stopped, as by common consent, after a short time, looking at each other very much astonished and rather serious. They both left me without affectation, and I remained alone with my thoughts. Indeed, it was natural that the burning kisses I had given and received should have sent through me the fire of passion and that I should suddenly have fallen madly in love with the two charming sisters. Both were handsomer than Angela, and they were superior to her—Nanette by her charming wit, Marton by her sweet and simple nature. I could not understand how I had been so long in rendering them the justice they deserved, but they were the innocent daughters of a noble family, and the lucky chance which had thrown them in my way ought not to prove a calamity for them. I was not vain enough to suppose that they loved me, but I could well enough admit that my kisses had influenced them in the same manner that their kisses had influenced me, and, believing this to be the case, it was evident that, with a little cunning on my part and some sly practices of which they were ignorant, I could easily, during the long night I was going to spend with them, obtain favours the consequences of which might be very positive. The very thought made me shudder, and I firmly resolved to respect their virtue, never dreaming that circumstances might prove too strong for me.

When they returned, I read upon their countenances perfect security and satisfaction, and I quickly put on the same appearance, with a full determination not to expose myself again to the danger of their kisses.

For one hour we spoke of Angela, and I expressed my determination never to see her again, as I had every proof that she did not care for me. "She loves you," said the artless Marton; "I know she does, but, if you do not mean to marry her, you will do well to give up all intercourse with her, for she is quite determined not to grant you even a kiss as long as you are not her acknowledged suitor. You must therefore either give up the acquaintance altogether or make up your mind that she will refuse you everything."

"You argue very well, but how do you know that she loves me?"

"I am quite sure of it, and, as you have promised to be our brother, I can tell you why I have that conviction. When Angela is in bed with me, she embraces me lovingly and calls me her *dear abbé*."

The words were scarcely spoken when Nanette, laughing heartily, placed her hand on her sister's lips, but the innocent confession had such an effect upon me that I could hardly control myself.

Marton told Nanette that I could not possibly be ignorant of what takes place between young girls sleeping together.

"There is no doubt," I said, "that everybody knows those trifles, and I do not think, dear Nanette, that you ought to reproach your sister with indiscretion for her friendly confidence."

"It cannot be helped now, but such things ought not to be mentioned. If Angela knew it!"

"She would be vexed, of course; but Marton has given me a mark of her friendship which I never can forget. But it is all over; I hate Angela, and I do not mean to speak to her any more; she is false and wishes my ruin."

"Yet, loving you, is she wrong to think of having you for her husband?"

"Granted that she is not; but she thinks only of her own self, for she knows what I suffer, and her conduct would be very different if she loved me. In the meantime, thanks to her imagination, she finds the means of satisfying her senses with the charming Marton, who kindly performs the part of her husband."

Nanette laughed louder, but I kept very serious and went on talking to her sister and praising her sincerity. I said that very likely, and to reciprocate her kindness, Angela must likewise have been her husband, but she answered, with a smile, that Angela played husband only to Nanette, and Nanette could not deny it.

"But," said I, "what name did Nanette, in her rapture, give to her husband?"

"Nobody knows."

"Do you love anyone, Nanette?"

"I do; but my secret is my own."

This reserve gave me the suspicion that I had something to do with her secret and that Nanette was the rival of Angela. Such a delightful conversation caused me to lose the wish of passing an idle night with two girls so well made for love.

"It is very lucky," I exclaimed, "that I have for you only feelings of

friendship; otherwise it would be very hard to pass the night without giving way to the temptation of bestowing upon you proofs of my affection, for you are both so lovely, so bewitching that you would turn the brains of any man."

As I went on talking, I pretended to be somewhat sleepy; Nanette, being the first to notice it, said, "Go to bed without any ceremony; we will lie down on the sofa in the adjoining room."

"I would be a very poor-spirited fellow indeed if I agreed to this; let us talk; my sleepiness will soon pass off, but I am anxious about you. Go to bed yourselves, my charming friends, and I will go into the next room. If you are afraid of me, lock the door, but you would do me an injustice, for I feel only a brother's yearnings towards you."

"We cannot accept such an arrangement," said Nanette, "but let me persuade you; take this bed."

"I cannot sleep with my clothes on."

"Undress; we will not look at you."

"I have no fear of it, but how could I find the heart to sleep while on my account you are compelled to sit up?"

"Well," said Marton, "we can lie down, too, without undressing."

"If you show me such distrust, you will offend me. Tell me, Nanette, do you think I am an honourable man?"

"Most certainly."

"Well, then, give me a proof of your good opinion; lie down near me in the bed, undressed, and rely on my word of honour that I will not even lay a finger upon you. Besides, you are two against one; what can you fear? Will you not be free to get out of the bed in case I should not keep quiet? In short, unless you consent to give me this mark of your confidence in me, at least when I have fallen asleep, I cannot go to bed."

I said no more and pretended to be very sleepy. They exchanged a few words, whispering to each other, and Marton told me to go to bed, that they would follow me as soon as I was asleep. Nanette made me the same promise, I turned my back to them, undressed quickly and, wishing them good night, went to bed. I immediately pretended to fall asleep, but soon I dozed in good earnest, and did not wake until they came to bed. Then, turning round as if I wished to resume my slumbers, I remained very quiet until I could suppose them fast asleep; at all events, if they did not sleep, they were at liberty to pretend to do so. Their backs were towards me, and the light was out; therefore I could act only at random, and I paid my first compliments to the one who was lying on my right, not knowing whether she was Nanette or Marton. I find her bent double and wrapped up in the only garment she had kept on. Taking my time, and sparing her modesty, I compel her by degrees to acknowledge her defeat and convince her that it is better to feign sleep. Enraptured, I quietly leave my beauty in order to do homage to the other sister. I find her motionless, lying on her back like a person wrapped in profound and undisturbed slumber. At that moment, giving way suddenly to the violence of her feelings and tired

of her dissimulation, she warmly locks me in her arms and smothers me with kisses.

Guessing her to be Nanette, I whisper her name.

"Yes, I am Nanette," she answers, "and I declare myself happy, as well as my sister, if you prove yourself true and faithful."

"Until death, my beloved ones, and, as everything we have done is the work of love, do not let us ever mention the name of Angela."

After this I begged that she would give us a light; but Marton, always kind and obliging, got out of bed, leaving us alone. When I saw Nanette in my arms, beaming with love, and Marton near the bed, holding a candle, with her eyes reproaching us with ingratitude because we did not speak to her who, by accepting my first caresses, had encouraged her sister to follow her example, I realised all my happiness.

"Let us get up, my darlings," said I, "and swear to each other eternal affection."

When we had risen, we ate the remains of our supper, exchanging those thousand trifling words which love alone can understand, and we again retired to our bed, where we spent a most delightful night. Madame Orio having left the house to go to church, I had to hasten my departure, after assuring the two lovely sisters that they had effectually extinguished whatever flame might still have flickered in my heart for Angela. I went home and slept soundly until dinner-time.

M. de Malipiero passed a remark upon my cheerful looks and the dark circles around my eyes, but I kept my own counsel and allowed him to think whatever he pleased. On the following day I paid a visit to Madame Orio and Angela not being of the party, remained to supper and retired with M. Rosa. During the evening Nanette contrived to give me a letter and a small parcel. The parcel contained a small lump of wax with the stamp of a key, and the letter told me to have a key made and to use it to enter the house whenever I wished to spend the night with them. She informed me at the same time that Angela had slept with them the night following our adventures and that, thanks to their mutual and usual practices, she had guessed the real state of things, that they had not denied it, adding that it was all her fault, and that Angela, after abusing them most vehemently, had sworn never again to darken their doors; but they did not care a jot.

A few days afterwards our good fortune delivered us from Angela; she was taken to Vicenza by her father, who had removed there for a couple of years, having been engaged to paint frescoes in some houses in that city. Thanks to her absence, I found myself undisturbed possessor of the two charming sisters, with whom I spent at least two nights every week, finding no difficulty in entering the house with the key which I had speedily procured.

Carnival was nearly over when M. Manzoni informed me one day that the celebrated Juliette wished to see me and regretted much that I had ceased to visit her. I felt curious as to what she had to say to me and accompanied him to her house. She received me very politely, and, remarking that she had heard of a large hall I had in my house,

she said she would like to give a ball there if I would give her the use of it. I readily consented, and she handed me twenty-four sequins for the supper and for the band, undertaking to send people to place chandeliers in the hall and in my other rooms.

M. de Sanvitali had left Venice, and the Parmesan government had placed his estates in chancery in consequence of his extravagant expenditure. I met him at Versailles ten years afterwards. He wore the insignia of the king's order of knighthood and was grand equerry to the eldest daughter of Louis XV, the Duchess of Parma, who like all the French princesses, could not be reconciled to the climate of Italy.

The ball took place and went off splendidly. All the guests belonged to Juliette's set, with the exception of Madame Orio, her nieces and the procurator Rosa, who sat together in the room adjoining the hall and whom I had been permitted to introduce as persons of no consequence whatever.

While the after-supper minuets were being danced, Juliette took me aside, and said, "Take me to your bedroom; I have just got an amusing idea."

My room was on the third story; I showed her the way. The moment we entered, she bolted the door, much to my surprise. "I wish you," she said, "to dress me up in your ecclesiastical clothes, and I will disguise you as a woman with my own things. We will go down and dance together. Come, let us first dress our hair."

Feeling sure of something pleasant to come and delighted with such an unusual adventure, I lose no time in arranging her hair and let her afterwards dress mine. She applies rouge and a few beauty spots to my face; I humour her in everything, and, to prove her satisfaction, she gives me with the best of grace a very loving kiss, on condition that I do not ask for anything else.

"As you please, beautiful Juliette, but I give you due notice that I adore you!"

I place upon my bed a shirt, an abbé's neckband, a pair of drawers, black silk stockings—in fact, a complete outfit. Coming near the bed, Juliette drops her skirt and cleverly gets into the drawers, which were not a bad fit, but, when she comes to the breeches, there is some difficulty; the waist-band is too narrow, and the only remedy is to rip it behind or to cut it if necessary. I undertake to make everything right, and, as I sit on the foot of my bed, she places herself in front of me, with her back towards me. I begin my work, but she thinks that I want to see too much, that I am not skilful enough and that my fingers wander in unnecessary places; she gets fidgety, leaves me, tears the breeches and manages in her own way. Then I help her to put her shoes on and pass the shirt over her head, but, as I am disposing the ruffle and the neckband, she complains of my hands being too curious; and in truth, her bosom was rather scanty. She calls me "*knave*" and "*rascal*," but I take no notice of her. I was not going to be duped, and I thought that a woman who had been paid one hundred thousand ducats was well worth some study. At last, her toilet being com-

pleted, my turn comes. In spite of her objections, I quickly get rid of my breeches, and she must put on me the chemise, then a skirt—in a word, she has to dress me. But all at once, playing the coquette, she gets angry because I do not conceal from her glances the very apparent proof that her charms have some effect on me, and she refuses to grant me the favour which would soon afford both relief and calm. I try to kiss her, and she repulses me, whereupon I lose patience. At the sight of this she pours out every insulting word she can think of; I endeavour to prove that she is to blame, but it is all in vain. However, she is compelled to complete my disguise.

There is no doubt that a virtuous woman would not have exposed herself to such an adventure unless she had intended to prove her tender feelings, and that she would not have drawn back at the very moment she saw them shared by her companion; but women like Juliette are often guided by a spirit of contradiction which causes them to act against their own interest. Besides, she felt disappointed when she found out that I was not timid, and my want of restraint appeared to her a want of respect. She would not have objected to my stealing a few light favours, which she would have allowed me to take as being of no importance, but, by doing that, I should have flattered her vanity too highly.

Our disguise being complete, we went together to the dancing-hall, where the enthusiastic applause of the guests soon restored our good temper. Everybody gave me credit for a piece of fortune which I had not enjoyed, but I was not ill-pleased with the rumour and went on dancing with the false abbé, who was only too charming. Juliette treated me so well during the night that I construed her manners towards me into some sort of repentance and almost regretted what had taken place between us; it was a momentary weakness for which I was sorely punished.

At the end of the quadrille all the men thought they had a right to take liberties with the abbé, and I became myself rather free with the young girls, who would have been afraid of exposing themselves to ridicule had they offered any opposition to my caresses.

M. Querini was foolish enough to inquire from me whether I had kept on my breeches, and, as I answered that I had been compelled to lend them to Juliette, he looked very unhappy, sat down in a corner of the room and refused to dance.

Every one of the guests soon remarked that I had on a woman's chemise, and nobody entertained a doubt of the sacrifice having been consummated, with the exception of Nanette and Marton, who could not imagine the possibility of my being unfaithful to them. Juliette perceived that she had been guilty of great imprudence, but it was too late to remedy the evil.

When we returned to my chamber upstairs, thinking that she had repented of her previous behaviour and feeling some desire to possess her, I thought I would kiss her; I took hold of her hand, saying I was disposed to give her every satisfaction, but she quickly slapped my

face in so violent a manner that, in my indignation, I was very near returning the compliment. I undressed rapidly without looking at her, she did the same, and we came downstairs; but, in spite of the cold water I had applied to my cheek, everyone could easily see the stamp of the large hand which had come in contact with my face.

Before leaving the house, Juliette took me aside and told me in the most decided and impressive manner that, if I had any fancy for being thrown out of the window, I could enjoy that pleasure whenever I liked to enter her dwelling and that she would have me murdered if this night's adventure ever became publicly known. I took care not to give her any cause for the execution of either of her threats, but I could not prevent the fact of our having exchanged shirts being rather notorious. As I was not seen at her house, it was generally supposed that she had been compelled by M. Querini to keep me at a distance. The reader will see how, six years later, this extraordinary woman thought proper to feign entire forgetfulness of this adventure.

I passed Lent partly in the company of loved ones, partly in the study of experimental physics at the Convent of the Salutation. My evenings were always given to M. de Malipiero's assemblies. At Easter, in order to keep the promise I had made to the Countess of Mont Réal and longing to see again my beautiful Lucie, I went to Paséan. I found the guests entirely different from the set I had met the previous autumn. Count Daniel, the eldest of the family, had married a Countess Gozzi, and a young and wealthy government official, who had married a god-daughter of the old countess, was there with his wife and his sister-in-law. I thought the supper very long. The same room had been given to me, and I was burning to see Lucie, whom I did not intend to treat any more like a child. I did not see her before going to bed, but I was awaiting her early the next morning, when lo! instead of her pretty face brightening my eyes, I see standing before me a fat, ugly servant girl! I inquire after the gatekeeper's family, but her answer is given in the peculiar dialect of the place and is, of course, unintelligible to me.

I wonder what has become of Lucie; I fancy that our intimacy has been found out, I fancy that she is ill—dead, perhaps. I dress with the intention of looking for her. If she has been forbidden to see me, I think to myself, I will be even with them all, for somehow or other I will contrive the means of speaking to her, and out of spite I will do with her that which honour prevented love from accomplishing. As I am revolving such thoughts, the gatekeeper comes in with a sorrowful countenance. I inquire after his wife's health and after his daughter, but at the name of Lucie his eyes are filled with tears.

"What! is she dead?"

"Would to God she were!"

"What has she done?"

"She has run away with Count Daniel's courier, and we have been unable to trace her anywhere."

His wife comes in at the moment he replies, and at these words,

which renewed her grief, the poor woman faints away. The keeper, seeing how sincerely I felt for his misery, tells me that this great misfortune befell them only a week before my arrival.

"I know that man l'Aigle," I say. "He is a scoundrel. Did he ask to marry Lucie?"

"No; he knew well enough that our consent would have been refused."

"I wonder at Lucie acting in such a way."

"He seduced her, and her running away made us suspect the truth, for she had become very stout."

"Had he known her long?"

"About a month after your last visit she saw him for the first time. He must have thrown a spell over her, for our Lucie was as pure as a dove, and you can, I believe, bear testimony to her goodness."

"And no one knows where they are?"

"No one. God alone knows what this villain will do with her."

I grieved as much as the unfortunate parents; I went out and took a long ramble in the woods to give way to my sad feelings. During two hours I cogitated over considerations, some true, some false, which were all prefaced by an *if*. If I had paid this visit, as I might have done, a week sooner, loving Lucie would have confided in me, and I would have prevented that self-murder. If I had acted with her as with Nanette and Marton, she would not have been left by me in that state of ardent excitement which must have proved the principal cause of her fault, and she would not have fallen a prey to that scoundrel. If she had not known me before meeting the courier, her innocent soul would never have listened to such a man. I was in despair, for in my conscience I acknowledged myself the primary agent of this infamous seduction; I had prepared the way for the villain.

*E'l fior che sol potea pormi fra dei,
Quel fior che intatto io me venia serbando
Per non turbar, ohimè, l'animo casto,
Ohimè! il bel fior colui m'ha colto, e gusto!*

Had I known where to find Lucie, I would certainly have gone forth on the instant to seek her, but no trace whatever of her whereabouts had been discovered.

Before I had been made acquainted with Lucie's misfortune, I felt great pride at having had sufficient power over myself to respect her innocence; but, after hearing what had happened, I was ashamed of my own reserve and promised myself that in future I would on that score act more wisely. I felt truly miserable when my imagination painted the probability of the unfortunate girl being left to poverty and shame, cursing the remembrance of me and hating me as the first cause of her misery. This fatal event caused me to adopt a new system, which in after years I carried sometimes rather too far.

I joined the cheerful guests of the countess in the gardens and received such a welcome that I was soon again in my usual spirits, and

at dinner I delighted everyone. My sorrow was so great that it was necessary either to drive it away at once or leave Paséan. But a new life crept into my being as I examined the face and the disposition of the newly married lady. Her sister was prettier, but I was beginning to feel afraid of a novice; I thought the work too great.

This newly married lady, who was between nineteen and twenty years of age, drew upon herself everybody's attention by her overstrained and unnatural manners. A great talker, with a memory crammed with maxims and precepts often without sense, but of which she loved to make a show, very devout and so jealous of her husband that she did not conceal her vexation when he expressed his satisfaction at being seated at table opposite her sister, she laid herself open to much ridicule. Her husband was a giddy young fellow, who perhaps felt very deep affection for his wife, but who imagined that, through good breeding, he ought to appear very indifferent, and whose vanity found pleasure in giving her constant causes for jealousy. She, in her turn, had a great dread of passing for an idiot if she did not show her appreciation of, and her resentment at, his conduct. She felt uneasy in the midst of good company precisely because she wished to appear thoroughly at home. If I prattled away with some of my trifling nonsense, she would stare at me and, in her anxiety not to be thought stupid, would laugh out of season. Her oddity, her awkwardness and her self-conceit gave me the desire to know her better, and I began to dance attendance on her.

My attentions, important and unimportant, my constant care, even my fopperies, let everybody know that I meditated conquest. The husband was duly warned, but, with a great show of intrepidity, he answered with a joke every time he was told that I was a formidable rival. On my side I assumed a modest, and even sometimes a careless, appearance, when, to show his freedom from jealousy, he encouraged me to make love to his wife, who, on her part, understood but little how to perform the part of fancy free.

I had been paying my address to her for five or six days with great constancy when, taking a walk with her in the garden, she imprudently confided to me the reason of her anxiety respecting her husband and how wrong he was to give her any cause for jealousy. I told her, speaking as an old friend, that the best way to punish him would be to take no apparent notice of his preference for her sister and to feign to be herself in love with me. In order to entice her more easily to follow my advice, I added that I was well aware of my plan being a very difficult one to carry out and that, to play successfully such a character, a woman must be particularly clever. I had touched her weak spot, and she exclaimed that she would play the part to perfection; but, in spite of her self-confidence, she acquitted herself so badly that everybody understood that the plan was of my own scheming.

If I happened to be alone with her in the dark paths of the garden and tried to make her play her part in real earnest, she would take the dangerous step of running away and rejoining the other guests—

the result being that, on my reappearance, I was called a bad sportsman who frightened the bird away. I would not fail at the first opportunity to reproach her for her flight and to represent the triumph she had thus prepared for her spouse. I praised her mind, but lamented over the shortcomings of her education; I said that the tone, the manners I adopted towards her were those of good society and proved the great esteem I entertained for her intelligence, but in the middle of all my fine speeches, towards the eleventh or twelfth day of my courtship, she suddenly put me out of all conceit by telling me that, being a priest, I ought to know that every amorous connection was a deadly sin, that God could see every action of His creatures and that she would neither damn her soul nor place herself under the necessity of saying to her confessor that she had so far forgotten herself as to commit such a sin with a priest. I objected that I was not yet a priest, but she foiled me by inquiring point-blank whether or not the act I had in view was to be numbered amongst the cardinal sins, for, not feeling the courage to deny it, I felt that I must give up the argument and put an end to the adventure.

A little consideration having calmed my feelings, everybody remarked my new countenance during dinner; and the old count, who was very fond of a joke, expressed loudly his opinion that such quiet demeanour on my part announced the complete success of my campaign. Considering such a remark to be favourable to me, I took care to show my cruel devotee that such was the way the world would judge, but all this was lost labour. Luck, however, stood me in good stead, and my efforts were crowned with success in the following manner.

On Ascension Day, we all went to pay a visit to Madame Bergali, a celebrated Italian poetess. On our return to Paséan the same evening, my pretty mistress wished to get into a carriage for four persons in which her husband and sister were already seated, while I was alone in a two-wheeled chaise. I exclaimed at this, saying that such a mark of distrust was indeed too pointed, and everybody remonstrated with her, saying that she ought not to insult me so cruelly. She was compelled to come with me, and I having told the postillion that I wanted to go by the nearest road, he left the other carriages and took the way through the forest of Cequini. The sky was clear and cloudless when we left, but in less than half an hour we were visited by one of those storms so frequent in the south, which appear likely to overthrow heaven and earth and which end rapidly, leaving behind them a bright sky and a cool atmosphere, so that they do more good than harm.

"Oh, heavens!" exclaims my companion, "we shall have a storm."

"Yes," I say, "and although the chaise is covered, the rain will spoil your pretty dress. I am very sorry."

"I do not mind the dress; but the thunder frightens me so!"

"Close your ears."

"And the lightning?"

"Postillion, let us go somewhere for shelter."

"There is not a house, sir, for a league, and, before we come to it, the storm will have passed off."

He quietly keeps on his way, and the lightning flashes, the thunder sends forth its mighty noise, and the lady shudders with fright. The rain comes down in torrents, I take off my cloak to shelter us in front, at the same moment we are blinded by a flash of lightning, and the electric fluid strikes the earth within one hundred yards of us. The horses plunge and prance with fear, and my companion falls into spasmodic convulsions. She throws herself upon me, and folds me in her arms. The cloak has fallen down; I stoop to place it around us, and, improving my opportunity, I lift up her clothes. She tries to pull them down, but another clap of thunder deprives her of every particle of strength. Covering her with the cloak, I draw her towards me, and, the motion of the chaise coming to my assistance, she falls over me. I lose no time, under the pretence of arranging my watch in my fob. On her side, conscious that, unless she stops me at once, all is lost, she makes a great effort; but I hold her tightly, saying that, if she does not feign a fainting-fit, the post-boy will turn round and see everything; I let her enjoy the pleasure of calling me an infidel, a monster, anything she likes.

The rain meanwhile was falling; the wind, which was very high, blew in our faces; and, compelled to stay where she was, she said I would ruin her reputation, as the postillion could see everything.

"I keep my eye on him," I answered. "He is not thinking of us, and, even if he should turn his head, the cloak shelters us from him. Be quiet and pretend to have fainted for I will not let you go."

She seems resigned and asks how I can thus set the storm at defiance.

"The storm, dear one, is my best friend to-day."

She almost seems to believe me, and her fear vanishes. I smile, stating that I cannot let her go till the storm is over. "Consent to everything, or I let the cloak drop," I say to her.

"Well, you dreadful man, are you satisfied, now that you have ensured my misery for the remainder of my life?"

"Not, not yet."

"What more do you want?"

"A shower of kisses."

"How unhappy I am. Well! here they are."

"Tell me you forgive me, and confess that you shared all my happiness."

"You know I did. Yes, I forgive you."

Then I give her her liberty, and, treating her to some very loving caresses, I ask her to have the same kindness for me, which she does with a smile on her pretty lips.

"Tell me you love me," I say to her.

"No, I do not, for you are an atheist, and hell awaits you!"

The weather was fine again and the elements calm; I kissed her hands and told her that the postillion had certainly not seen anything and that I was sure I had cured her of her dread of thunder, but that

she was not likely to reveal the secret of my remedy. She answered that one thing at least was certain, namely, that no other woman had ever been cured by the same prescription.

"Why," I said, "the same remedy has very likely been applied a million of times within the last thousand years. To tell you the truth, I had somewhat depended upon it, when we entered the chaise together, for I did not know any other way of obtaining the happiness of possessing you. But console yourself with the belief that, placed in the same position, no frightened woman could have resisted."

"I believe you; but in future I will travel only with my husband."

"You would be wrong, for your husband would not have been clever enough to cure your fright in the way I have done."

"True again. One learns some curious things in your company; but we shall not travel *tête-à-tête* again."

We reached Paséan an hour before our friends. We got out of the chaise, and my fair mistress ran off to her chamber, while I was looking for a crown for the postillion. I saw that he was grinning.

"What are you laughing at?"

"Oh! you know."

"Here, take this ducat and keep a quiet tongue in your head."

CHAPTER 6

DURING supper the conversation turned altogether upon the storm, and the official, who knew the weakness of his wife, told me that he was quite certain I would never travel with her again. "Nor I with him," his wife remarked, "for, in his fearful impiety, he exorcised the lightning with jokes."

Thenceforth she avoided me so skilfully that I never could contrive another interview with her.

When I returned to Venice, I found my grandmother ill and had to change all my habits, for I loved her too dearly not to surround her with every care and attention; I never left her until she had breathed her last. She was unable to leave me anything, for during her life she had given me all she could, and her death compelled me to adopt an entirely different mode of life.

A month after her death I received a letter from my mother informing me that, as there was no probability of her return to Venice, she had determined to give up the house, the rent of which she was still paying, that she had communicated her intention to the Abbé Grimani and that I was to be guided entirely by his advice. He was instructed to sell the furniture and to place me, as well as my brothers and my sister, in a good boarding-house. I called upon Grimani to assure him of my perfect disposition to obey his commands.

The rent of the house had been paid until the end of the year; but, as I was aware that the furniture would be sold on the expiration of the term, I placed my wants under no restraint. I had already sold some

linen, most of the china and several tapestries; I now began to dispose of the mirrors, beds, etc. I had no doubt that my conduct would be severely blamed, but I knew likewise that it was my father's inheritance, to which my mother had no claim whatever, and, as to my brothers, there was plenty of time before any explanation could take place between us.

Four months afterwards I had a second letter from my mother, dated from Warsaw, and enclosing another. Here is the translation of my mother's letter:

"My dear son, I have made here the acquaintance of a learned Minim friar, a Calabrian by birth, whose great qualities have made me think of you every time he has honoured me with a visit. A year ago I told him that I had a son who was preparing himself for the Church, but that I had not the means of keeping him during his studies, and he promised that my son would become his own child, if I could obtain for him from the queen a bishopric in his native country, and he added that it would be very easy to succeed if I could induce the sovereign to recommend him to her daughter, the Queen of Naples.

"Full of trust in the Almighty, I threw myself at the feet of Her Majesty, who granted me her gracious protection. She wrote to her daughter, and the worthy friar has been appointed by the Pope to the bishopric of Monterano. Faithful to his promise, the good bishop will take you with him about the middle of next year, as he passes through Venice to reach Calabria. He informs you himself of his intentions in the enclosed letter. Answer him immediately, my dear son, and forward your letter to me; I will deliver it to the bishop. He will pave your way to the highest dignities of the Church, and you may imagine my consolation if, in some twenty or thirty years, I had the happiness of seeing you a bishop, at least! Until his arrival, M. Grimani will take care of you. I give you my blessing, and I am, my dear child, etc., etc."

The bishop's letter was written in Latin and was only a repetition of my mother's. It was full of unction and informed me that he would tarry but three days in Venice.

I answered according to my mother's wishes, but those two letters had turned my brain. I looked upon my fortune as made. I longed to enter the road which was to lead me to it and congratulated myself that I could leave my country without any regret. "Farewell, Venice!" I exclaimed. "The days for vanity are gone by; in future I will think only of a great, of a substantial career!" M. Grimani congratulated me warmly on my good luck and promised all his friendly care to secure a good boarding-house, to which I would go at the beginning of the year and where I would await the bishop's arrival.

M. de Malipiero, who in his own way had great wisdom and who saw that in Venice I was plunging headlong into pleasures and dissipation and was only wasting a precious time, was delighted to see me on the eve of going somewhere else to fulfil my destiny and much pleased with my ready acceptance of these new circumstances in my life. He read me a lesson which I have never forgotten. "The famous precept of the Stoic

philosophers," he said to me, "*Sequere Deum*, can be perfectly explained by these words: 'Give yourself up to whatever fate offers to you, provided you do not feel an invincible repugnance to accept it.' " He added that it was the genius of Socrates, *sæpe revocans, raro impellens*; and that it was the origin of the *Fata viam inveniunt* of the same philosophers.

M. de Malipiero's science was embodied in that very lesson, for he had obtained his knowledge by the study of only one book—the book of man. However, as if it were to give me the proof that perfection does not exist and that there is a bad side as well as a good one to everything, a certain adventure happened to me a month afterwards which, although I was following his own maxims, cost me the loss of his friendship and certainly did not teach me anything.

The senator fancied that he could trace upon the physiognomy of young people certain signs which marked them out as the special favourites of fortune. When he imagined that he had discovered those signs upon any individual, he would take him in hand and instruct him how to assist fortune by good and wise principles; and he used to say, with a great deal of truth, that a good remedy would turn into poison in the hands of a fool, but that poison is a good remedy when administered by a learned man. He had in my time three favourites in whose education he took great pains. They were, besides myself, Thérèse Imer, with whom the reader has a slight acquaintance already, and the third was the daughter of the boatman Gardela, a girl three years younger than I, who had the prettiest and most fascinating countenance. The speculative old man, in order to assist fortune in her particular case, made her learn dancing, for, he would say, the ball cannot reach the pocket unless someone pushes it. This girl made a great reputation at Stuttgart under the name of Augusta. She was the favourite mistress of the Duke of Wurtemberg in 1757. She was the most charming woman! The last time I saw her she was in Venice, and she died two years afterwards. Her husband, Michel de l'Agata, poisoned himself a short time after her death.

One day we had all three dined with him, and after dinner the senator left us, as was his wont, to enjoy his siesta; the little Gardela, having a dancing lesson to take, went away soon after him, and I found myself alone with Thérèse, whom I rather admired, although I had never made love to her. We were sitting down at a table very near each other, with our backs to the door of the room in which we thought our patron fast asleep, and somehow or other we took a fancy to examine into the difference of conformation between a girl and a boy; but at the most interesting part of our study a violent blow on my shoulders from a stick, followed by another, which would itself have been followed by many more if I had not run away, compelled us to abandon our interesting investigation unfinished. I got off without hat or cloak and went home; but in less than a quarter of an hour the senator's old housekeeper brought my clothes, with a letter which contained a command never to present myself again at the mansion of His Excellency. I immediately

wrote him an answer in the following terms: "You have struck me while you were the slave of your anger; you cannot therefore boast of having given me a lesson, and I have not learned anything. To forgive you, I must forget that you are a man of great wisdom, and I can never forget it."

This nobleman was perhaps quite right not to be pleased with the sight we gave him; yet, with all his prudence, he proved himself very unwise, for all the servants were acquainted with the cause of my exile, and, of course, the adventure was soon known through the city and was received with great merriment. He dared not address any reproaches to Thérèse, as I heard from her soon after, but she could not venture to entreat him to pardon me.

The time to leave my father's house was drawing near, and one fine morning I received the visit of a man about forty years old, with a black wig, a scarlet cloak and a very swarthy complexion, who handed me a letter from M. Grimani, ordering me to consign to the bearer all the furniture of the house according to the inventory, a copy of which was in my possession. Taking the inventory in my hand, I pointed out every article marked down, except when the said article, having through my instrumentality taken an airing out of the house, happened to be missing, and whenever any article was absent, I said that I had not the slightest idea where it might be. But the uncouth fellow, taking a very high tone, said loudly that he must know what I had done with the furniture. His manner being very disagreeable to me, I answered that I had nothing to do with him, and, as he still raised his voice, I advised him to take himself off as quickly as possible and gave him that piece of advice in such a way as to prove to him that at home I knew I was the more powerful of the two.

Feeling it my duty to give information to M. Grimani of what had just taken place, I called upon him as soon as he was up, but found that my man had already been there and had given his own account of the affair. The abbé, after a very severe lecture to which I had to listen in silence, ordered me to render an account of all the missing articles. I answered that I had found myself under the necessity of selling them to avoid running into debt. This confession threw him into a violent passion; he called me a rascal, said that those things did not belong to me, that he knew what he had to do, and he commanded me to leave his house on the very instant.

Mad with rage, I ran for a Jew, to whom I wanted to sell what remained of the furniture, but, when I returned to my house, I found a bailiff waiting at the door, and he handed me a summons. I looked it over and perceived that it was issued at the instance of Antonio Razetta. It was the name of the fellow with the swarthy countenance. The seals were already affixed on all the doors, and I was not even allowed to go to my room, for a keeper had been left there by the bailiff. I lost no time and called upon M. Rosa, to whom I related all the circumstances. After reading the summons, he said:

"The seals shall be removed to-morrow morning, and in the meantime"

I shall summon Razetta before the *avogador*. But to-night, my dear friend," he added, "you must beg the hospitality of some one of your acquaintances. It has been a violent proceeding, but you shall be paid handsomely for it; the man is evidently acting under M. Grimani's orders."

"Well, that is their business."

I spent the night with Nanette and Marton, and on the following morning, the seals having been taken off, I took possession of my dwelling. Razetta did not appear before the *avogador*, and M. Rosa summoned him in my name before the criminal court, and obtained against him a writ of *capias* in case he should not obey the second summons. On the third day M. Grimani wrote to me, commanding me to call upon him. I went immediately. As soon as I was in his presence, he inquired abruptly what my intentions were.

"I intend to shield myself from your violent proceedings under the protection of the law and to defend myself against a man with whom I ought never to have had any connection and who compelled me to pass the night in a disreputable place."

"In a disreputable place?"

"Of course. Why was I, against all right and justice, prevented from entering my own dwelling?"

"You have possession of it now. But you must go to your lawyer and tell him to suspend all proceedings against Razetta, who has done nothing but under my instructions. I suspected that your intention was to sell the rest of the furniture; I have prevented it. There is a room at your disposal at St. Chrysostom's in a house of mine, the first floor of which is occupied by La Tintoretta, our first opera dancer. Send all your things there, and come and dine with me every day. Your sister and your brothers have been provided with a comfortable home; therefore everything is now arranged for the best."

I called at once upon M. Rosa, to whom I explained all that had taken place, and, his advice being to give way to M. Grimani's wishes, I determined to follow it. Besides, the arrangement offered the best satisfaction I could obtain, as to be a guest at his dinner-table was an honour for me. I was likewise full of curiosity respecting my new lodging under the same roof with La Tintoretta, who was much talked of, owing to a certain Prince of Waldeck, who was extravagantly generous with her.

The bishop was expected in the course of the summer; I had, therefore, only six months more to wait in Venice before taking the road which would lead me, perhaps, to the throne of Saint Peter; everything in the future assumed in my eyes the brightest hue, and my imagination revelled amongst the most radiant beams of sunshine; my castles in the air were indeed most beautiful.

I dined the same day with M. Grimani and found myself seated next to Razetta—an unpleasant neighbour, but I took no notice of him. When the meal was over, I paid a last visit to my beautiful house in St.

Samuel's parish and sent all I possessed in a gondola to my new lodging.

I did not know Signora Tintoretta, but I was well acquainted with her reputation, character and manners. She was but a poor dancer, neither handsome nor plain, but a woman of wit and intellect. Prince Waldeck spent a great deal on her, and yet he did not prevent her from retaining the titular protection of a noble Venetian of the Lin family, now extinct, a man about sixty years of age, who was her visitor at every hour of the day. This nobleman, who knew me, came to my room towards the evening with the compliments of the lady, who, he added, was delighted to have me in her house and would be pleased to receive me in her intimate circle.

To excuse myself for not having been the first to pay my respects to the signora, I told M. Lin that I did not know she was my neighbour, that M. Grimani had not mentioned the circumstance, otherwise I would have paid my duties to her before taking possession of my lodging. After this apology I followed the ambassador, he presented me to his mistress, and the acquaintance was made.

She received me like a princess, took off her glove before giving me her hand to kiss, mentioned my name before five or six strangers who were present, and whose names she gave me, and invited me to take a seat near her. As she was a native of Venice, I thought it was absurd for her to speak French to me and told her that I was not acquainted with that language and would feel grateful if she would converse in Italian. She was surprised at my not speaking French and said I would cut but a very poor figure in her drawing-room, as they seldom spoke any other language there because she received a great many foreigners. I promised to learn French. Prince Waldeck came in during the evening; I was introduced to him, and he gave me a very friendly welcome. He could speak Italian very well, and during the carnival he showed me great kindness. He presented me with a gold snuff-box as a reward for a very poor sonnet which I had written for his dear Grizellini. This was her family name; she was called Tintoretta because her father had been a dyer.

The Tintoretta had greater claims than Juliette to the admiration of sensible men. She loved poetry, and, if it had not been that I was expecting the bishop, I would have fallen in love with her. She was herself smitten with a young physician of great merit named Righelini, who died in the prime of life and whom I still regret. I shall have to mention him in another part of my *Memoirs*.

Towards the end of the carnival my mother wrote to M. Grimani that it would be a great shame if the bishop found me under the roof of an opera dancer, and he made up his mind to lodge me in a respectable and decent place. He took the Abbé Tosello into consultation, and the two gentlemen thought that the best thing they could do for me would be to send me to a clerical seminary. They arranged everything unknown to me, and the abbé undertook to inform me of their plan and obtain from me a gracious consent. But, when I heard him speak with beautiful

flowers of rhetoric for the purpose of gilding the bitter pill, I could not help bursting into a joyous laughter and astounded his reverence when I expressed my readiness to go anywhere he might think right to send me.

The plan of the two worthy gentlemen was absurd, for at the age of seventeen and with a nature like mine, the idea of placing me in a seminary ought never to have been entertained, but ever a faithful disciple of Socrates, feeling no unconquerable reluctance, and the plan on the contrary appearing to me rather a good joke, I not only gave a ready consent but even longed to enter the seminary. I told M. Grimani I was prepared to accept anything, provided Razetta had nothing to do with it. He gave me his promise, but he did not keep it when I left the seminary. I have never been able to decide whether this Grimani was kind because he was a fool, or whether his stupidity was the result of his kindness, but all his brothers were the same. The worst trick that Dame Fortune can play upon an intelligent young man is to place him in dependence upon a fool. A few days afterwards, having been dressed as a pupil of a clerical seminary by the care of the abbé, I was taken to St. Cyprian de Muran and introduced to the rector.

The patriarchal church of St. Cyprian is served by an order of the monks founded by the blessed Jérôme Miani, a nobleman of Venice. The rector received me with tender affection and great kindness. But in his address, which was full of unction, I thought I could perceive a suspicion on his part that my being sent to the seminary was a punishment or at least a way to put a stop to an irregular life, and, feeling hurt in my dignity, I told him at once, "Reverend father, I do not think that anyone has the right to punish me."

"No, no, my son," he answered. "I only meant that you would be very happy with us."

We were then shown three halls, in which we found at least one hundred and fifty seminarists, ten or twelve schoolrooms, the refectory, the dormitory, the gardens for play hours, and every care was taken to make me imagine life in such a place the happiest that could fall to the lot of a young man, and to make me suppose that I would even regret the arrival of the bishop. Yet they all tried to cheer me up by saying that I would remain there only five or six months. Their eloquence amused me greatly.

I entered the seminary at the beginning of March and prepared myself for my new life by passing the night between my two young friends, Nanette and Marton, who bathed their pillows with tears; they could not understand, and this was likewise the feeling of their aunt of the good M. Rosa, how a young man like myself could show such obedience.

The day before going to the seminary I had taken care to entrust all my papers to Madame Manzoni. They made a large parcel, and I left it in her hands for fifteen years. The worthy old lady is still alive and with her ninety years enjoys good health and a cheerful

temper. She received me with a smile and told me that I would not remain one month in the seminary.

"I beg your pardon, madame, but I am very glad to go there and intend to remain until the arrival of the bishop."

"You do not know your own nature, and you do not know your bishop, with whom you will not remain very long either."

The abbé accompanied me to the seminary in a gondola, but at St. Michel he had to stop in consequence of a violent attack of vomiting which seized me suddenly; the apothecary cured me with some mint water.

I was indebted for this attack to the too frequent sacrifices which I had been offering on the altar of love. Any lover who knows what his feelings were when he was with the woman he adored and feared that it was for the last time will easily imagine my feelings during the last hours that I expected ever to spend with my two charming mistresses. I could not be induced to let the last offering be the last.

The priest committed me to the care of the rector, and my luggage was carried to the dormitory, where I went myself to deposit my cloak and hat. I was not placed amongst the adults because, notwithstanding my size, I was not old enough. Besides, I would not shave, through vanity, because I thought that the down on my face left no doubt of my youth. It was ridiculous, of course; but when does man cease to be so? We get rid of our vices more easily than of our follies. Tyranny had not had sufficient power over me to compel me to shave; it is only in that respect that I have found tyranny to be tolerant.

"To which school do you wish to belong?" asked the rector.

"To the dogmatic, reverend father; I wish to study the history of the Church."

"I will introduce you to the father examiner."

"I am a doctor in divinity, most reverend father, and do not want to be examined."

"It is necessary, my dear son; come with me."

This necessity appeared to me an insult, and I felt very angry; but a spirit of revenge quickly whispered to me the best way to mystify them, and the idea made me very joyful. I answered so badly all the questions propounded in Latin by the examiner, I made so many solecisms that he felt it his duty to send me to an inferior class of grammar, in which, to my great delight, I found myself the companion of some twenty young urchins of about ten years, who hearing that I was a doctor in divinity, kept on saying, *Accipiamus pecuniam et mittamus asinum in patriam suam*.

Our play hours afforded me great amusement; my companions of the dormitory, who were all in the class of philosophy at least, looked down upon me with great contempt, and, when they spoke of their own sublime discourses, they laughed if I appeared to be listening attentively to their discussions, which, as they thought, must have been perfect enigmas to me. I did not intend to betray myself, but an accident which I could not avoid forced me to throw off the mask.

Father Barbarigo, belonging to the Convent of the Salutation at Venice, whose pupil I had been in physics, came to pay a visit to the rector and, seeing me as we were coming from mass, paid me his friendly compliments. His first question was to inquire what science I was studying, and he thought I was joking when I answered that I was learning the grammar. The rector having joined us, I left them together and went to my class. An hour later the rector sent for me.

"Why did you feign such ignorance at the examination?" he asked.

"Why," I answered, "were you unjust enough to compel me to undergo the degradation of an examination?"

He looked annoyed and escorted me to the dogmatic school, where my comrades of the dormitory received me with great astonishment, and in the afternoon at play-time they gathered around me and made me very happy with their professions of friendship.

One of them, about fifteen years old and who at the present time must, if still alive, be a bishop, attracted my notice by his features as much as by his talents. He inspired me with a very warm friendship, and during recess, instead of playing skittles with the others, we always walked together. We conversed upon poetry, and we both delighted in the beautiful odes of Horace. We liked Ariosto better than Tasso, and Petrarch had our whole admiration, while Tassoni and Muratori, who had been his critics, were the special objects of our contempt. We were such fast friends after four days of acquaintance that we were actually jealous of each other and to such an extent that, if either of us walked about with any seminarist, the other would be angry and sulk like a disappointed lover.

The dormitory was placed under the supervision of a lay friar, and it was his province to keep us in good order. After supper, accompanied by this lay friar, who had the title of prefect, we all proceeded to the dormitory. There everyone had to go to his own bed and undress quietly after having said his prayers in a low voice. When all the pupils were in bed, the prefect would go to his own. A large lantern lighted up the dormitory, which had the shape of a parallelogram, eighty yards by ten. The beds were placed at equal distances, and to each bed there were a faldstool, a chair and room for the trunk of the seminarist. At one end was the washing place and at the other the bed of the prefect. My friend's bed was opposite mine, and the lantern was between us.

The principal duty of the prefect was to take care that no pupil should go and sleep with one of his comrades, for such a visit was never supposed an innocent one. It was a cardinal sin, and, bed being accounted the place for sleep and not for conversation, it was admitted that a pupil who slept out of his own bed did so only for immoral purposes. So long as he stayed in his own bed, he could do what he liked; so much the worse for him if he gave himself up to bad practices.

Those who framed the regulations in our seminary were stupid fools who had not the slightest knowledge of either morals or human nature. Nature has wants which must be ministered to, and Tissot is right

only so far as the abuse of nature is concerned, but this abuse would very seldom occur if the directors exercised proper wisdom and prudence and if they did not make a point of forbidding it in a special and peculiar manner; young people give way to dangerous excesses from a sheer delight in disobedience—a disposition very natural to humankind, since it began with Adam and Eve.

I had been in the seminary for nine or ten days when one night I felt someone stealing very quietly into my bed; my hand was at once clutched and my name whispered. I could hardly restrain my laughter. It was my friend, who, having chanced to wake up and finding that the lantern was out, had taken a sudden fancy to pay me a visit. I very soon begged him to go away, for fear the prefect should be awake, for in such a case we should have found ourselves in a very unpleasant dilemma and most likely would have been accused of some abominable offence. As I was giving him that good advice, we heard someone moving, and my friend made his escape; but, immediately after he had left me, I heard the fall of some person and at the same time the hoarse voice of the prefect exclaiming, "Ah, villain! wait until to-morrow—until to-morrow!"

After which threat he lighted the lantern and retired to his couch.

The next morning, before the ringing of the bell for rising, the rector, followed by the prefect, entered the dormitory and said to us:

"Listen to me, all of you. You are aware of what took place last night. Two amongst you must be guilty; but I wish to forgive them, and to save their honour I promise that their names shall not be made public. I expect every one of you to come to me for confession before recess."

He left the dormitory, and we dressed ourselves. In the afternoon, in obedience to his orders, we all went to him and confessed, after which ceremony we repaired to the garden, where my friend told me that, having unfortunately met the prefect after he left me, he had thought that the best way was to knock him down, in order to get time to reach his own bed without being known.

"And now," I said, "you are certain of being forgiven, for, of course, you have wisely confessed your error?"

"You are joking," answered my friend. "Why! the good rector would not have known any more than he knows at present, even if my visit to you had been paid with a criminal intent."

"Then you must have made a false confession; you are at all events guilty of disobedience?"

"That may be, but the rector is responsible for the guilt, as he used compulsion."

"My dear friend, you argue in a very forcible way, and the very reverend rector must by this time be satisfied that the inmates of our dormitory are more learned than he is himself."

No more would have been said about the adventure if a few nights after I had not in my turn taken a fancy to return the visit paid by my friend. Towards midnight, having had occasion to get out of bed

and hearing the loud snoring of the prefect, I quickly put out the lantern and went to lie beside my friend. He knew me at once and gladly received me; but we both listened attentively to the snoring of our keeper, and, when it ceased, understanding our danger, I got up and reached my own bed without losing a second, but the moment I got to it I had a double surprise. In the first place I felt somebody lying in my bed, and in the second I saw the prefect, with a candle in his hand, coming along slowly and taking a survey of all the beds, right and left. I could understand the prefect suddenly lighting a candle, but how could I realise what I saw—namely, one of my comrades sleeping soundly in my bed, with his back turned to me? I immediately made up my mind to feign sleep. After two or three shakings given by the prefect, I pretended to wake up, and my bed-companion woke up in earnest. Astonished at finding himself in my bed, he offered me an apology.

"I have made a mistake," he said. "As I returned from a certain place in the dark, I found your bed empty and mistook it for mine."

"Very likely," I answered. "I had to get up, too."

"Yes," remarked the prefect, "but how does it happen that you went to bed without making any remark when, on your return, you found your bed already tenanted? And how is it that, being in the dark, you did not suppose that you were mistaken yourself?"

"I could not be mistaken, for I felt the pedestal of this crucifix of mine and knew I was right; as to my companion here, I did not feel him."

"It is all very unlikely," answered our Argus; and he went to the lantern, the wick of which he found crushed down.

"The wick has been forced into the oil, gentlemen; it has not gone out of itself; it has been the handiwork of one of you, but it will be seen to in the morning."

My stupid companion went to his own bed, the prefect lighted the lamp and returned to his rest, and after this scene, which had broken the repose of every pupil, I quietly slept until the appearance of the rector, who at the dawn of day came in great fury, escorted by his satellite, the prefect.

The rector, after examining the localities and subjecting to a lengthy interrogatory first my accomplice, who very naturally was considered as the more guilty, and then myself, whom nothing could convict of the offence, ordered us to get up and go to church to attend mass. As soon as we were dressed, he came back and, addressing us both, said, kindly:

"You both stand convicted of a scandalous connivance, and it is proved by the fact of the lantern having been wilfully extinguished. I am disposed to believe that the cause of all this disorder is, if not entirely innocent, at least due only to extreme thoughtlessness; but the scandal given to all your comrades, the outrage offered to the discipline and to the established rules of the seminary call loudly for punishment. Leave the room."

We obeyed; but hardly were we between the double doors of the dormitory than we were seized by four servants, who tied our hands behind us and led us to the class-room, where they compelled us to kneel down before the great crucifix. The rector told them to execute his orders, and, as we were in that position, the wretches administered to each of us seven or eight blows with a stick, or with a rope, which I received, as well as my companion, without a murmur. But the moment my hands were free, I asked the rector whether I could write two lines at the very foot of the cross. He gave orders to bring ink and paper, and I traced the following words:

"I solemnly swear by this God that I have never spoken to the seminarist who was found in my bed. As an innocent person, I must protest against this shameful violence. I shall appeal to the justice of His Lordship the patriarch."

My comrade in misery signed this protest with me; after which, addressing myself to all the pupils, I read it aloud, calling upon them to speak the truth if anyone could say the contrary of what I had written. They with one voice immediately declared that we had never been seen conversing together and that no one knew who had put the lamp out. The rector left the room in the midst of hisses and curses, but he sent us to prison all the same at the top of the house and in separate cells. An hour afterwards I had my bed, my trunk and all my things, and my meals were brought to me every day. On the fourth day the Abbé Tosello came for me with instructions to bring me to Venice. I asked him whether he had sifted this unpleasant affair; he told me that he had enquired into it, that he had seen the other seminarist and that he believed we were both innocent; but the rector would not confess himself in the wrong, and he did not see what could be done.

I threw off my seminarist's habit and dressed myself in the clothes I used to wear in Venice, and, while my luggage was carried to a boat, I accompanied the abbé to M. Grimani's gondola in which he had come, and we took our departure. On our way, the abbé ordered the boatman to leave my things at the Palace Grimani, adding that he was instructed by M. Grimani to tell me that, if I had the audacity to present myself at his mansion, his servants had received orders to turn me away.

He landed me near the convent of the Jesuits without any money and with nothing but what I had on my back.

I went to beg a dinner from Madame Manzoni, who laughed heartily at the realisation of her prediction. After dinner I called upon M. Rosa to see whether the law could protect me against the tyranny of my enemies, and, after he had been made acquainted with the circumstances of the case, he promised to bring me the same evening, at Madame Orio's house, an extra-judicial act. I repaired to the place of appointment to wait for him and to enjoy the pleasure of my two charming friends at my sudden reappearance. It was indeed very great, and the recital of my adventures did not astonish them less than my unexpected presence. M. Rosa came and made me read the act which he had prepared; he had

not had time to have it engrossed by the notary, but he undertook to have it ready the next day.

I left Madame Orio to take supper with my brother François, who resided with a painter called Guardi; he was, like me, much oppressed by the tyranny of Grimani and I promised to deliver him. Towards midnight I returned to the two amiable sisters who were awaiting me with their usual loving impatience, but, I am bound to confess it with all humility, my sorrows were prejudicial to love, in spite of the fortnight of absence and abstinence. They were themselves deeply affected to see me so unhappy and pitied me with all their hearts. I endeavoured to console them and assured them that all my misery would soon come to an end and that we would make up for lost time.

In the morning, having no money and not knowing where to go, I went to St. Mark's Library, where I remained until noon. I left, with the intention of dining with Madame Manzoni, but I was suddenly accosted by a soldier, who informed me that someone wanted to speak to me in a gondola to which he pointed. I answered that the person might as well come out, but he quietly remarked that he had a friend at hand to conduct me forcibly to the gondola if necessary, and without any more hesitation I went towards it. I had a great dislike to noise or anything like a public exhibition. I might have resisted, for the soldiers were unarmed, and I would not have been taken up, this sort of arrest not being legal in Venice, but I did not think of it. The *sequere Deum* was playing its part; I felt no reluctance. Besides, there are moments in which a courageous man has no courage, or disdains to show it.

I enter the gondola, the curtain is drawn aside, and I see . . . my evil genius, Razetta, with an officer. The two soldiers sit down at the prow; I recognise M. Grimani's own gondola, it leaves the landing and takes the direction of the Lido. No one spoke to me, and I remained silent. After half-an-hour's sailing, the gondola stopped before the small entrance of the Fortress St. André at the mouth of the Adriatic, on the very spot where the Bucentaur stands when on Ascension Day the doge comes to espouse the sea.

The sentinel calls the corporal; we alight, the officer who accompanied me introduces me to the major and presents a letter to him. The major, after reading its contents, gives orders to M. Zen, his adjutant, to consign me to the guard-house. In another quarter of an hour my conductors take their departure, and M. Zen brings me three livres and a half, stating that I would receive the same amount every week. It was exactly the pay of a private.

I did not give way to any burst of passion, but felt the most intense indignation. Late in the evening I expressed a wish to have some food bought, for I could not starve; then, stretching myself upon a hard camp bed, I passed the night amongst the soldiers without closing my eyes, for these Sclavonians were singing, eating garlic, smoking a bad tobacco which was most noxious and drinking a wine of their own country, as black as ink, which nobody else could swallow.

Early next morning Major Pelodoro, the governor of the fortress,

called me up to his room and told me that, in compelling me to spend the night in the guard-house, he had only obeyed the orders he had received from Venice from the Secretary of War. "Now, reverend sir," he added, "my further orders are only to keep you a prisoner in the fort, and I am responsible for your remaining here. I give you the whole of the fortress for your prison. You shall have a good room, in which you will find your bed and all your luggage. Walk anywhere you please; but recollect that, if you should escape, you would cause my ruin. I am sorry that my instructions are to give you only ten sous a day, but, if you have any friends in Venice able to send you some money, write to them and trust to me for the security of your letters. Now you may go to bed if you need rest."

I was taken to my room; it was large and on the first story, with two windows, from which I had a very fine view. I found my bed and ascertained with great satisfaction that my trunks, of which I had the keys, had not been forced open. The major had kindly supplied my table with all the implements necessary for writing. A Sclavonian soldier informed me very politely that he would attend upon me and that I would pay him for his services whenever I could, for everyone knew that I had only ten sous a day. I began by ordering some soup and, when I had dispatched it, went to bed and slept for nine hours. When I woke, I received an invitation to supper from the major, and I began to imagine that things, after all, would not be so very bad.

I went to the honest governor, whom I found in numerous company. He presented me to his wife and to every person present. I met there several officers, the chaplain of the fortress, a certain Paoli Vida, one of the singers of St. Mark's Church, and his wife, a pretty woman, sister-in-law of the major, whom the husband chose to confine in the fort because he was very jealous (jealous men are not comfortable at Venice), together with several other ladies, not very young, but whom I thought very agreeable, owing to their kind welcome.

Cheerful as I was by nature, those pleasant guests easily managed to put me in the best of humours. Everyone expressed a wish to know the reasons which could have induced M. Grimani to send me to the fortress, so I gave a faithful account of all my adventures since my grandmother's death. I spoke for three hours without any bitterness, and even in a pleasant tone, upon things which, said in a different manner, might have displeased my audience; all expressed their satisfaction and showed so much sympathy that, as we parted for the night, I received from all an assurance of friendship and the offer of their services. This is a piece of good fortune which has never failed me whenever I have been the victim of oppression—until I reached the age of fifty. Whenever I met with honest persons expressing a curiosity to know the history of the misfortune under which I was labouring and whenever I satisfied their curiosity, I have inspired them with friendship and with that sympathy which was necessary to render them favourable and useful to me.

That success was owing to a very simple artifice: it was only to tell my story in a quiet and truthful manner, without even avoiding the

facts which told against me. It is a simple secret that many men do not know, because the larger portion of humankind is composed of cowards; a man who always tells the truth must be possessed of great moral courage. Experience has taught me that truth is a talisman, the charm of which never fails in its effect, provided it is not wasted upon unworthy people, and I believe that a guilty man who candidly speaks the truth to his judge has a better chance of being acquitted than the innocent man who hesitates and evades true statements. Of course the speaker must be young or at least in the prime of manhood; for an old man finds the whole of nature combined against him.

The major had his joke respecting the visit paid and returned to the seminarist's bed, but the chaplain and the ladies scolded him. The major advised me to write out my story and send it to the Secretary of War, undertaking that he should receive it, and he assured me that he would become my protector. All the ladies tried to induce me to follow the major's advice.

CHAPTER 7

THE fort, in which the Republic usually kept only a garrison of one hundred half-pay Slavonians, happened to contain at that time two thousand Albanian soldiers, who were called Cimariones.

The Secretary of War, who was generally known under the title of *sage à l'écriture*, had summoned these men from the East in consequence of some impending promotion, as he wanted the officers to be on the spot in order to prove their merits before being rewarded. They all came from the part of Epirus called Albania, which belongs to the Republic of Venice, and they had distinguished themselves in the last war against the Turks. It was for me a new and extraordinary sight to examine some eighteen or twenty officers, all of an advanced age, yet strong and healthy, showing the scars which covered their faces and their chests, the last naked and entirely exposed through military pride. The lieutenant-colonel was particularly conspicuous by his wounds, for without exaggeration he had lost one-fourth of his head. He had but one eye, but one ear and no jaw to speak of. Yet he could eat very well, speak without difficulty, and was very cheerful. He had with him all his family, composed of two pretty daughters, who looked all the prettier in their national costume, and seven sons, every one of them a soldier. This lieutenant-colonel stood six feet high, and his figure was magnificent, but his scars so completely deformed his features that his face was truly horrid to look at. Yet I found so much attraction in him that I liked him the moment I saw him and would have been much pleased to converse with him if his breath had not sent forth such a strong smell of garlic. All the Albanians had their pockets full of it, and they enjoyed a piece of garlic with as much relish as we do a sugar-plum. After this none can maintain it to be a poison, though the only medicinal virtue it possesses is to excite the appetite, because it acts like a tonic upon a weak stomach.

The lieutenant-colonel could not read, but he was not ashamed of his ignorance, because not one amongst his men, except the priest and the surgeon, could boast greater learning. Every man, officer or private, had his purse full of gold; half of them, at least, were married, and we had in the fortress a colony of five or six hundred women, with God knows how many children! I felt greatly interested in them all. Happy idleness, I often regret thee because thou hast offered me many new sights, and for the same reason I hate old age, which never offers but what I know already, unless I should take up a gazette—but I cared nothing for gazettes in my young days.

Alone in my room, I made an inventory of my trunk and, having put aside everything of an ecclesiastical character, sent for a Jew and sold the whole parcel unmercifully. Then I wrote to M. Rosa, enclosing all the tickets of the articles I had pledged, requesting him to have them sold without any exception and to forward me the surplus raised by the sale. Thanks to that double operation, I was enabled to give my Sclavonian servant the ten sous allowed to me every day. Another soldier, who had been a hairdresser, took care of my hair, which I had been compelled to neglect, in consequence of the rules of the seminary. I spent my time in walking about the fort and through the barracks, and my two places of resort were the major's apartment for some intellectual enjoyment and the rooms of the Albanian lieutenant-colonel for a sprinkling of love. The Albanian, feeling certain that his colonel would be appointed brigadier, solicited the command of the regiment, but he had a rival whose success he feared. I wrote a petition for him, short but so well composed that the Secretary of War, having inquired the name of the author, gave the Albanian his colonelcy. On his return to the fort the brave fellow, overjoyed at his success, hugged me in his arms, saying that he owed it all to me; he invited me to a family dinner, in which my very soul was parched by his garlic, and he presented me with twelve botargoes and two pounds of excellent Turkish tobacco.

The result of my petition made all the other officers think that they could not succeed without the assistance of my pen, and I willingly gave it to everybody; this entailed many quarrels upon me, for I served all interests, but, finding myself the lucky possessor of some forty sequins, I was no longer in dread of poverty and laughed at everything. However, I met with an accident which made me pass six weeks in a very unpleasant condition.

On the 2nd of April, the fatal anniversary of my first appearance in this world, as I was getting up in the morning, I received in my room the visit of a very handsome Greek woman, who told me that her husband, then ensign in the regiment, had every right to claim the rank of lieutenant and would certainly be appointed if it were not for the opposition of his captain, who was against him because she had refused him certain favours which she could bestow only upon her husband. She handed me some certificates and begged me to write a petition which she would herself present to the Secretary of War, adding that she could offer me only her heart in payment. I answered that her heart ought

not to go alone; I acted as I had spoken and met with no other resistance than the objection which a pretty woman is always sure to feign for the sake of appearance. After that I told her to come back at noon and the petition would be ready. She was exact to the appointment and very kindly rewarded me a second time; and in the evening, under pretence of some alterations to be made in the petition, she afforded an excellent opportunity of reaping a third recompence.

But, alas! the path of pleasure is not strewn only with roses! On the third day I found out, much to my dismay, that a serpent had been hid under the flowers. Six weeks of care and of rigid diet re-established my health.

When I met the handsome Greek again, I was foolish enough to reproach her for the present she had bestowed upon me, but she baffled me by laughing and saying that she had offered me only what she possessed and that it was my own fault if I had not been sufficiently careful. The reader cannot imagine how much this misfortune grieved me and what deep shame I felt. I looked upon myself as a dishonoured man, and, while I am on that subject, I may as well relate an incident which will give some idea of my thoughtlessness.

Madame Vida, the major's sister-in-law, being alone with me one morning, confided in me in a moment of unreserved confidence what she had to suffer from the jealous disposition of her husband and his cruelty in having allowed her to sleep alone for the last four years, when she was in the very flower of her age.

"I trust to God," she added, "that my husband will not find out that you have spent an hour alone with me, for I should never hear the end of it."

Feeling deeply for her grief and confidence begetting confidence, I was stupid enough to tell her the sad state to which I had been reduced by the cruel Greek woman, assuring her that I felt my misery all the more deeply because I should have been delighted to console her and to give her the opportunity of a revenge for her jealous husband's coldness. At this speech, in which my simplicity and good faith could easily be traced, she rose from her chair and upbraided me with every insult which an outraged virtuous woman might hurl at the head of a bold libertine who has presumed too far. Astounded, but understanding perfectly well the nature of my crime, I bowed myself out of her room; but, as I was leaving it, she told me in the same angry tone that my visits would not be welcome in future, as I was a conceited puppy, unworthy of the society of good and respectable women. I took care to answer that a respectable woman would have been rather more reserved than she had been in her confidences. On reflection I felt pretty sure that, if I had been in good health or had said nothing about my mishap, she would have been but too happy to receive my consolations.

A few days after that incident I had a much greater cause to regret my acquaintance with the Greek woman. On Ascension Day, as the ceremony of the Bucentaur was celebrated near the fort, M. Rosa brought Madame Orio and her two nieces to witness it, and I had the

pleasure of treating them all to a good dinner in my room. I found myself during the day alone with my young friends in one of the case-mates, and they both loaded me with the most loving caresses and kisses. I felt that they expected some substantial proof of my love; but, to conceal the real state of things, I pretended to be afraid of being surprised, and they had to be satisfied with my shallow excuse.

I had informed my mother by letter of all I had suffered from Grimani's treatment; she answered that she had written to him on the subject, that she had no doubt he would immediately set me at liberty and that an arrangement had been entered into by which M. Grimani would devote the money raised by Razetta from the sale of the furniture to the settlement of a small patrimony on my youngest brother. But in this matter Grimani did not act honestly, for the patrimony was not settled until thirteen years afterwards, and even then only in a fictitious manner. I shall have an opportunity later on of mentioning this unfortunate brother, who died very poor in Rome twenty years ago.

Towards the middle of June the Cimariotes were sent back to the East, and after their departure the garrison of the fort was reduced to its usual number. I began to feel weary in this comparative solitude and gave way to terrible fits of passion.

The heat was intense and so disagreeable to me that I wrote to M. Grimani, asking for two summer suits of clothes and telling him where they would be found if Razetta had not sold them. A week afterwards I was in the major's apartment when I saw the wretch Razetta come in, accompanied by a man whom he introduced as Petrillo, the famous favourite of the Empress of Russia, just arrived from St. Petersburg. He ought to have said "infamous" instead of "famous," and "clown" instead of "favourite."

The major invited them to take a seat, and Razetta, receiving a parcel from Grimani's gondolier, handed it to me, saying, "I have brought you your rags; take them."

I answered, "Some day I will bring you a *rigano*."

At these words the scoundrel dared to raise his cane, but the indignant major compelled him to lower his tone by asking him whether he had any wish to pass the night in the guard-house. Petrillo, who had not yet opened his lips, told me then that he was sorry not to have found me in Venice, as I might have shown him round certain places which must be well known to me.

"Very likely we should have met your wife in such places," I answered.

"I am a good judge of faces," he said, "and I can see that you are a true gallows-bird."

I was trembling with rage, and the major, who shared my utter disgust, told them that he had business to transact, and they took their leave. The major assured me that on the following day he would go to the War Office to complain of Razetta and that he would have him punished for his insolence.

I remained alone, a prey to feelings of the deepest indignation and to a most ardent thirst for revenge.

The fortress was entirely surrounded by water, and my windows were not overlooked by any of the sentinels. A boat coming under my windows could therefore easily take me to Venice during the night and bring me back to the fortress before daybreak. All that was necessary was to find a boatman who for a certain amount would risk the galleys in case of discovery. Amongst several who brought provisions to the fort I chose a boatman whose countenance pleased me, and I offered him one sequin; he promised to let me know his decision on the following day. He was true to his time and declared himself ready to take me. He informed me that, before deciding to serve me, he had wished to know whether I was kept in the fort for any great crime, but, as the wife of the major had told him that my imprisonment had been caused by very trifling frolics, I could rely upon him. We arranged that he should be under my window at the beginning of the night and that his boat should be provided with a mast long enough to enable me to slide along it from the window to the boat.

The appointed hour came, and, everything being ready, I got safely into the boat, landed at the Sclavonian quay, ordered the boatman to wait for me and, wrapped in a marine's cloak, took my way straight to the gate of St. Sauveur and engaged the waiter of a coffee-room to take me to Razetta's house.

Being quite certain that he would not be at home at that time, I rang the bell and heard my sister's voice telling me that, if I wanted to see him, I must call in the morning. Satisfied with this, I went to the foot of the bridge and sat down, waiting there to see which way he would come, and a few minutes before midnight I saw him advancing from the square of St. Paul. It was all I wanted to know; I went back to my boat and returned to the fort without any difficulty. At five o'clock in the morning everyone in the garrison could see me enjoying my walk on the platform.

Taking all the time necessary to mature my plans, I made the following arrangements to secure my revenge with perfect safety and to prove an alibi in case I should kill my rascally enemy, as it was my intention to do.

The day preceding the night fixed for my expedition, I walked about with the son of the Adjutant Zen, who was only twelve years old, but who amused me much by his shrewdness. The reader will meet him again in the year 1771. As I was walking with him, I jumped down from one of the bastions and feigned to sprain my ankle. Two soldiers carried me to my room, and the surgeon of the fort, thinking that I was suffering from a luxation, ordered me to keep to bed and wrapped up the ankle in towels saturated with camphorated spirits of wine. Everybody came to see me, and I requested the soldier who served me to remain and to sleep in my room. I knew that a glass of brandy was enough to stupefy the man and make him sleep soundly. As soon as I saw him fast asleep, I begged the surgeon and the chap-

lain (who had his room over mine) to leave me, and at half-past ten I lowered myself into the boat.

As soon as I reached Venice, I bought a stout cudgel and sat myself down on a doorstep at the corner of the street near St. Paul's Square. A narrow canal at the end of the street was, I thought, the very place to throw my enemy in. That canal has now disappeared.

At a quarter before twelve I see Razetta walking along leisurely. I come out of the street with rapid strides, keeping near the wall to compel him to make room for me, and I strike a first blow on the head and a second on his arm; the third blow sends him tumbling into the canal, howling and screaming my name. At the same instant a Forlan, or citizen of Forli, comes out of a house on my left side with a lantern in his hand. A blow from my cudgel knocks the lantern out of his grasp, and the man, frightened out of his wits, takes to his heels. I throw away my stick, run at full speed through the square and over the bridge and, while people are hastening towards the spot where the disturbance had taken place, jump into the boat and, thanks to a strong breeze swelling our sail, get back to the fortress. Twelve o'clock was striking as I re-entered my room through the window. I quickly undress, and, the moment I am in my bed, I wake up the soldier by my loud screams, telling him to go for the surgeon, as I am dying of the colic.

The chaplain, roused by my screaming, comes down and finds me in convulsions. In the hope that some diascordium would relieve me, the good old man runs to his room and brings it, but, while he has gone for some water, I hide the medicine. After half an hour of wry faces, I say that I feel much better and, thanking all my friends, beg them to retire, which everyone does, wishing me a quiet sleep.

The next morning I could not get up in consequence of my sprained ankle, although I had slept very well; the major was kind enough to call upon me before going to Venice and said that very likely my colic had been caused by the melon I had eaten for my dinner the day before.

The major returned at one o'clock in the afternoon. "I have good news to give you," he said to me, with a joyful laugh. "Razetta was soundly cudgelled last night and thrown into a canal."

"Was he killed?"

"No; but I am glad of it for your sake, for his death would make your position much more serious. You are accused of having done it."

"I am very glad people think me guilty; it is something of a revenge, but it will be rather difficult to bring it home to me."

"Very difficult! All the same, Razetta swears he recognised you, and the same declaration is made by the Forlan, who says that you struck his hand to make him drop the lantern. Razetta's nose is broken, three of his teeth are gone, and his right arm is severely hurt. You have been accused before the *avogador*, and M. Grimani has written to the War Office to complain of your release from the fortress without his knowledge. I arrived at the office just in time. The Secretary.

was reading Grimani's letter, and I assured His Excellency that it was a false report, for I left you in bed this morning, suffering from a sprained ankle. I told him likewise that at twelve o'clock last night you were very near death from a severe attack of colic."

"Was it at midnight that Razetta was so well treated?"

"So says the official report. The War Secretary wrote at once to M. Grimani and informed him that you have not left the fort and that you are even now detained in it and that the plaintiff is at liberty, if he chooses, to send commissaries to ascertain the fact. Therefore, my dear abbé, you must prepare yourself for an interrogatory."

"I expect it, and I will answer that I am very sorry to be innocent."

Three days afterwards, a commissary came to the fort with a clerk of the court, and the proceedings were soon over. Everybody knew that I had sprained my ankle; the chaplain, the surgeon, my body-servant and several others swore that at midnight I was in bed suffering from colic. My alibi being thoroughly proved, the *avogador* sentenced Razetta and the Forlan to pay all the expenses without prejudice to my rights of action.

After this judgment the major advised me to address to the Secretary of War a petition, which he undertook to deliver himself, and to claim my release from the fort. I gave notice of my proceedings to M. Grimani, and a week afterwards the major told me that I was free and that he would himself take me to the abbé. It was at dinner-time and in the middle of some amusing conversation that he imparted that piece of information. Not supposing him to be in earnest and in order to keep up the joke, I told him very politely that I preferred his house to Venice and that, to prove it, I would be happy to remain a week longer if he would grant me permission to do so. I was taken at my word, and everybody seemed very pleased. But when, two hours later, the news was confirmed and I could no longer doubt the truth of my release, I repented the week which I had so foolishly thrown away as a present to the major; yet I had not the courage to break my word, for everybody, and particularly his wife, had shown such unaffected pleasure it would have been contemptible of me to change my mind. The good woman knew that I owed her every kindness which I had enjoyed, and she might have thought me ungrateful.

But I met in the fort with a last adventure, which I must not forget to relate.

On the following day, an officer dressed in the national uniform called upon the major, accompanied by an elderly man of about sixty years of age, wearing a sword, and, presenting to the major a dispatch with the seal of the War Office, he waited for an answer and went away as soon as he had received one from the governor.

After the officer had taken leave, the major, addressing himself to the elderly gentleman, to whom he gave the title of Count, told him that his orders were to keep him a prisoner and that he gave him the whole of the fort for his prison. The count offered him his sword, but the major nobly refused to take it and escorted him to the room he

was to occupy. Soon after a servant in livery brought a bed and a trunk, and the next morning the same servant, knocking at my door, told me that his master begged the honour of my company to breakfast. I accepted the invitation, and he received me with these words, "Dear sir, there has been so much talk in Venice about the skill with which you proved your incredible alibi, that I could not help asking for the honour of your acquaintance."

"But, count, the alibi being a true one, there can be no skill required to prove it. Allow me to say that those who doubt its truth are paying me a very poor compliment, for—"

"Never mind; do not let us talk any more of that, and forgive me. But, as we happen to be companions in misfortune, I trust you will not refuse me your friendship. Now for breakfast."

After our meal the count, who had heard from me some portion of my history, thought that my confidence called for a return on his part, and he began:

"I am the Count de Bonafede. In my early days I served under Prince Eugène, but I gave up the army and entered on a civil career in Austria. I had to fly from Austria and take refuge in Bavaria in consequence of an unfortunate duel. In Munich, I made the acquaintance of a young lady belonging to a noble family; I eloped with her and brought her to Venice, where we were married. I have now been twenty years in Venice. I have six children, and everybody knows me. About a week ago I sent my servant to the post office for my letters, but they were refused him because he had not any money to pay the postage. I went myself, but the clerk would not deliver me my letters, although I assured him that I would pay for them the next time. This made me angry, and I called upon the Baron de Taxis, the postmaster, and complained of the clerk, but he answered very rudely that the clerk had simply obeyed his orders and that my letters would be delivered only on payment of the postage. I felt very indignant, but, as I was in his house, I controlled my anger, went home and wrote a note to him, asking him to give me satisfaction for his rudeness, telling him that I would never go out without my sword and that I would force him to fight whenever and wherever I should meet him. I never came across him, but yesterday I was accosted by the secretary of the Inquisitors, who told me that I must forget the baron's rude conduct and go under the guidance of an officer whom he pointed out to me, to imprison myself for a week in this fortress. I shall thus have the pleasure of spending that time with you."

I told him that I had been free for the last twenty-four hours, but that, to show my gratitude for his friendly confidence, I would feel honoured if he would allow me to keep him company. As I had already engaged myself with the major, this was only a polite falsehood.

In the afternoon I happened to be with him on the tower of the fort and pointed out a gondola advancing towards the lower gate; he took his spy-glass and told me that it was his wife and daughter

coming to see him. We went to meet the ladies, one of whom might once have been worth the trouble of an elopement; the other, a young person between fourteen and sixteen, struck me as a beauty of a new style. Her hair was of a beautiful light auburn, her eyes were blue and very fine, her nose a Roman, and her pretty mouth, half-open and laughing, exposed a set of teeth as white as her complexion, although a beautiful rosy tint somewhat veiled the whiteness of the last. Her figure was so slight that it seemed out of nature, but her perfectly formed breast appeared an altar on which the god of love would have delighted to breathe the sweetest incense. This splendid chest was, however, not yet well furnished, but in my imagination I gave her all the *embonpoint* which might have been desired, and I was so pleased that I could not take my looks from her. I met her eyes, and her laughing countenance seemed to say to me, "Only wait for two years, at the utmost, and all that your imagination is now creating will then exist in reality."

She was elegantly dressed in the prevalent fashion, with large hoops, and like the daughters of the nobility who have not yet attained the age of puberty, although the young countess was marriageable. I had never dared to stare at the bosom of a young lady of quality, but I thought there was no harm in fixing my eyes on a spot where there was nothing yet but in expectation.

The count, having exchanged a few words in German with his wife, presented me in the most flattering manner, and I was received with great politeness. The major joined us, deeming it his duty to escort the countess all over the fortress, and I improved the excellent opportunity thrown in my way by the inferiority of my position; I offered my arm to the young lady, and the count left us to go to his room.

I had been trained in the old Venetian fashion of attending upon ladies, and the young countess thought me rather awkward, though I believed myself very fashionable when I placed my hand under her arm, but she drew it back in high merriment. Her mother turned round to inquire what she was laughing at, and I was terribly confused when I heard her answer that I had tickled her.

"This is the way to offer your arm to a lady," she said, and she passed her hand through my arm, which I rounded in the most clumsy manner, feeling it a very difficult task to resume a dignified countenance. Thinking me a novice of the most innocent species, she very likely determined to make sport of me. She began by remarking that, by rounding my arm as I had done, I placed it too far from her waist and that I was consequently out of drawing. I told her I did not know how to draw, and inquired whether it was one of her accomplishments.

"I am learning," she answered, "and, when you call upon us, I will show you *Adam and Eve*, after Chevalier Liberi; I have made a copy which has been judged very fine by some professors, although they did not know it was my work."

"Why did you not tell them?"

"Because those two figures are too naked."

"I am not curious to see your Adam, but I will look at your Eve with pleasure and keep your secret."

This answer made her laugh again, and again her mother turned round. I put on the look of a simpleton, for, seeing the advantage I could derive from her opinion of me, I had formed my plan at the very moment she tried to teach me how to offer my arm to a lady.

She was so convinced of my simplicity that she ventured to say that she considered her Adam by far the more beautiful than her Eve, because in her drawing of the man she had omitted nothing, every muscle being visible, while there was none conspicuous in Eve. "It is," she added, "a figure on which there is nothing to be seen."

"Yet it is the one which I shall like best."

"No; believe me, Adam will please you most."

This conversation had greatly excited me. I had on a pair of linen breeches, the weather being very warm. I was afraid the major and the countess, who were a few yards in front of us, might turn round. I was on pins and needles. To make matters worse, the young lady stumbled, one of her shoes slipped off, and, presenting me her pretty foot, she asked me to adjust the shoe. I knelt on the ground, and, very likely without thinking, she lifted up her skirt. She had very wide hoops and no petticoat. What I saw was enough to strike me dead on the spot. When I rose, she asked if anything was the matter with me.

A moment after, coming out of one of the casemates, her head-dress got slightly out of order, and she begged that I would remedy the accident, but, as she had to bend her head down, the state in which I was could no longer remain a secret for her. In order to avoid greater confusion to both of us, she inquired who had made my watch ribbon; I told her it was a present from my sister, and she desired to examine it, but, when I answered her that it was fastened to the fob-pocket, and found that she disbelieved me, I added that she could see for herself. She put her hand to it, and a natural but involuntary excitement caused me to be very indiscreet. She must have felt vexed, for she saw that she had made a mistake in her estimate of my character; she became more timid, she would not laugh any more, and we joined her mother and the major, who was showing her in a sentry-box the body of Marshal de Schulenburg, which had been deposited there until the mausoleum erected for him was completed. As for myself, I felt deeply ashamed. I thought myself the first man who had alarmed her innocence, and I felt ready to do anything to atone for the insult.

Such was my delicacy of feeling in those days. I used to credit people with exalted sentiments, which often existed only in my imagination. I must confess that time has entirely destroyed that delicacy; yet I do not believe myself worse than other men, my equals in age and experience.

We returned to the count's apartment, and the day passed off rather gloomily. Towards evening the ladies went away, but the countess gave me a pressing invitation to call upon them in Venice.

The young lady, whom I thought I had insulted, had made such a deep impression upon me that the seven following days seemed very long; yet I was impatient to see her again only that I might entreat her forgiveness and convince her of my repentance.

The following day the count was visited by his son; he was plain-featured, but a thorough gentleman and modest withal. Twenty-five years afterwards I met him in Spain, a cadet in the king's body-guard. He had served as a private twenty years before obtaining this poor promotion. The reader will hear of him in good time; I will only mention here that, when I met him in Spain, he stood me out that I had never known him; his self-love prompted this very contemptible lie.

Early on the eighth day the count left the fortress, and I took my departure the same evening, having made an appointment at a coffee-house in St. Mark's Square with the major, who was to accompany me to M. Grimani's house. I took leave of his wife, whose memory will always be dear to me, and she said, "I thank you for your skill in proving your alibi, but you have also to thank me for having understood you so well. My husband never heard anything about it until it was all over."

As soon as I reached Venice, I went to pay a visit to Madame Orio, where I was made welcome. I remained to supper, and my two charming sweethearts, who were praying for the death of the bishop, gave me the most delightful hospitality for the night.

At noon the next day I met the major according to our appointment, and we called upon the Abbé Grimani. He received me with the air of a guilty man begging for mercy, and I was astounded at his stupidity when he entreated me to forgive Razetta and his companion. He told me that the bishop was expected very soon and that he had ordered a room to be ready for me and that I could take my meals with him. Then he introduced me to M. Valavero, a man of talent, who had just left the Ministry of War, his term of office having lasted the usual six months. I paid my duty to him, and we kept up a kind of desultory conversation until the departure of the major. When he had left us, M. Valavero entreated me to confess that I had been the guilty party in the attack upon Razetta. I candidly told him that the thrashing had been my handiwork, and I gave him all the particulars, which amused him immensely. He remarked that, as I had perpetrated the affair before midnight, the fools had made a mistake in their accusation; but that, after all, the mistake had not materially helped me in proving the alibi, because my sprained ankle, which everybody had supposed a real accident, would of itself have been sufficient.

But I trust that my kind reader has not forgotten that I had a very heavy weight upon my conscience, of which I longed to get rid. I had to see the goddess of my fancy, to obtain my pardon or die at her feet.

I found the house without difficulty; the count was not at home. The countess received me very kindly, but her appearance caused me so

great a surprise that I did not know what to say to her. I had fancied that I was going to visit an angel, that I would find her in a lovely paradise, and I found myself in a large sitting-room furnished with four rickety chairs and a dirty old table. There was hardly any light in the room because the shutters were nearly closed. It might have been a precaution against the heat, but I judged that it was more probably for the purpose of concealing the windows, the glass of which was all broken. But this visible darkness did not prevent me from remarking that the countess was wrapped up in an old tattered gown and that her chemise did not shine by its cleanliness. Seeing that I was ill at ease, she left the room, saying that she would send her daughter, who, a few minutes afterwards, came in with an easy and noble appearance and told me that she had awaited me with great impatience, but that I had surprised her at a time at which she was not in the habit of receiving any visits.

I did not know what to answer, for she did not seem to me to be the same person. Her poverty-stricken dishabille made her look almost ugly, and I wondered at the impression she had produced upon me at the fortress. She saw my surprise and partly guessed my thoughts, for she put on a look, not of vexation but of sorrow, which called forth all my pity. If she had been a philosopher, she might have rightly despised me as a man whose sympathy was enlisted only by her fine dress, her nobility or her apparent wealth; but she endeavoured to bring me round by her sincerity. She felt that, if she could call a little sentiment into play, it would certainly plead in her favour.

"I see that you are astonished, reverend sir, and I know the reason of your surprise. You expected to see great splendor here, and you find only misery. The government allows my father but a small salary, and there are nine of us. As we must attend church on Sundays and holidays in a style proper to our condition, we are often compelled to go without our dinner in order to get out of pledge the clothes which urgent need too often obliges us to part with and which we pledge anew on the following day. If we did not attend mass, the curate would strike our names off the list of those who share the alms of the Confraternity of the Poor, and those alms alone keep us afloat."

What a sad tale! She had guessed rightly. I was touched, but rather with shame than true emotion. I was not rich myself, and, as I was no longer in love, I only heaved a deep sigh and remained as cold as ice. Nevertheless, her position was painful, and I answered politely, speaking with kindness and assuring her of my sympathy. "Were I wealthy," I said, "I would soon show you that your tale of woe has not fallen on unfeeling ears; but I am poor, and, being at the eve of my departure from Venice, even my friendship would be useless to you." Then, after some desultory talk, I expressed a hope that her beauty would yet win happiness for her. She seemed to consider for a few moments and said:

"That may happen some day, provided that the man who feels the power of my charms understands that they can be bestowed only with my heart, and is willing to render me the justice I deserve; I am only

looking for a lawful marriage, without dreaming of rank or fortune; I no longer believe in the first, and I know how to live without the second, for I have been accustomed to poverty and even to abject need; but you cannot realise that. Come and see my drawings."

"You are very good, mademoiselle."

Alas! I was not thinking of her drawings, and I could no longer feel interested in her Eve, but I followed her.

We came to a chamber in which I saw a table, a chair, a small toilet-glass and a bed with the straw palliasse turned over, very likely for the purpose of allowing the looker-on to suppose that there were sheets underneath, but I was particularly disgusted by a certain smell, the cause of which was recent; I was thunderstruck, and, if I had been still in love, this antidote would have been sufficiently powerful to cure me instantaneously. I wished for nothing but to make my escape, never to return, and regretted that I could not throw on the table a handful of ducats, which I should have considered the price of my ransom.

The poor girl showed me her drawings; they were fine, and I praised them, without alluding particularly to Eve and without venturing a joke upon Adam. I asked her, for the sake of saying something, why she did not try to render her talent remunerative by learning pastel drawing.

"I wish I could," she answered, "but the box of chalks alone costs two sequins."

"Will you forgive me if I am bold enough to offer you six?"

"Alas! I accept them gratefully, and to be indebted to you for such a service makes me truly happy."

Unable to keep back her tears, she turned her head round to conceal them from me, and I took that opportunity of laying the money on the table, and out of politeness, wishing to spare her every unnecessary humiliation, I saluted her lips with a kiss which she was at liberty to consider a loving one, as I wanted her to ascribe my reserve to the respect I felt for her. I then left her with a promise to call another day to see her father. I never kept my promise. The reader will see how I met her again after ten years.

How many thoughts crowded upon my mind as I left that house! What a lesson! I compared reality with the imagination and had to give the preference to the latter, as reality is always dependent on it. I then began to foresee a truth which has been clearly proved to me in my after-life, namely, that love is only a feeling of curiosity more or less intense, grafted upon the inclination placed in us by nature that the species may be preserved. And truly woman is like a book, which, good or bad, must first please us by the frontispiece. If this is not interesting, we do not feel any wish to read the book, and our wish is in direct proportion to the interest we feel. The frontispiece of woman runs from top to bottom like that of a book, and her feet, which are most important to every man who shares my taste, offer the same interest as the edition of the work. If it is true that most amateurs bestow little or no attention upon the feet of a woman, it is likewise

a fact that most readers care little or nothing whether a book is of the first edition or the tenth. At all events, women are quite right to take the greatest care of their face, of their dress, of their general appearance; for it is only by that part of the frontispiece that they can call forth a wish to read them in those men who have not been endowed by nature with the privilege of blindness. And just in the same manner that men, who have read a great many books, are certain to feel at last a desire for perusing new works even if they are bad, a man who has known many women, and all handsome women, feels at last a curiosity for ugly specimens when he meets with entirely new ones. It is all very well for his eye to discover the paint which conceals the reality, but his passion has become a vice, and suggests some argument in favor of the lying frontispiece. It is possible—at least he thinks so—that the work may prove better than the title page and the reality more acceptable than the paint which hides it. He then tries to peruse the book, but the leaves have not been opened; he meets with some resistance, the living book must be read according to established rules, and the book-worm falls a victim to coquetry, the monster which persecutes all those who make a business of love.

As for thee, intelligent man, who hast read the few preceding lines, let me tell thee that, if they do not assist in opening thine eyes, thou art lost; I mean that thou art certain of being a victim to the fair sex to the very last moment of thy life. If my candour does not displease thee, accept my congratulations.

In the evening I called upon Madame Orio, as I wanted to inform her charming nieces that, being an inmate of Grimani's house, I could not sleep out for the first night. I found there the faithful Rosa, who told me that the affair of the alibi was in every mouth and that, as such celebrity was evidently caused by a very decided belief in the untruth of the alibi itself, I ought to fear a retaliation of the same sort on the part of Razetta and to keep on my guard, particularly at night. I felt all the importance of this advice and took care never to go out in the evening otherwise than in a gondola or accompanied by some friends. Madame Manzoni told me that I was acting wisely because, although the judges could not do otherwise than acquit me, everybody knew the real truth of the matter, and Razetta could not fail to be my deadly foe.

Three or four days afterwards M. Grimani announced the arrival of the bishop, who had put up at the convent of his order, at St. François de Paul. He presented me to the prelate as a jewel highly prized by himself and as if he had been the only person worthy of descanting upon its beauty.

I saw a fine monk wearing his pectoral cross. He would have reminded me of Father Mancina if he had not looked stouter and less reserved. He was about thirty-four and had been made a bishop by the grace of God, the Holy See and my mother. After pronouncing over me a blessing, which I received kneeling, and giving me his hand to kiss, he embraced me warmly, calling me his "dear son" in the Latin

language, in which he continued to address me. I thought that, being a Calabrian, he might feel ashamed of his Italian, but he undeceived me by speaking in that language to M. Grimani. He told me that, as he could not take me with him from Venice, I should have to proceed to Rome, where Grimani would take care to send me, and that I would procure his address at Ancona from one of his friends, called Lazari, a Minim monk, who would likewise supply me with the means of continuing my journey.

"When we meet in Rome," he added, "we can go together to Martorano by way of Naples. Call upon me to-morrow morning and have your breakfast with me. I intend to leave the day after."

As we were on our way back to his house, M. Grimani treated me to a long lecture on morals, which nearly caused me to burst into loud laughter. Amongst other things, he informed me that I ought not to study too hard because the air in Calabria was very heavy and I might become consumptive from too close application to my books.

The next morning at daybreak I went to the bishop. After saying his mass, we took some chocolate, and for three hours he laid me under examination. I saw clearly that he was not pleased with me, but I was well enough pleased with him. He seemed to me a worthy man, and, as he was to lead me along the great highway of the Church, I felt attracted towards him, for at the time, although I entertained a very good opinion of my personal appearance, I had no confidence whatever in my talents.

After the departure of the good bishop, M. Grimani gave me a letter left by him, which I was to deliver to Father Lazari at the Convent of the Minims in Ancona. M. Grimani informed me that he would send me to that city with the ambassador from Venice, who was on the point of sailing. I had therefore to keep myself in readiness, and, as I was anxious to be out of his hands, I approved all his arrangements. As soon as I had notice of the day on which the suite of the ambassador would embark, I went to pay my last farewell to all my acquaintances. I left my brother François in the school of M. Foli, a celebrated decorative painter. As the peotta in which I was to sail would not leave before daybreak, I spent the short night in the arms of the two sisters, who this time entertained no hope of ever seeing me again. On my side I could not foresee what would happen, for I was abandoning myself to fate, and I thought it would be useless to think of the future. The night was therefore spent between joy and sadness, between pleasure and tears. As I bade them adieu, I returned the key which had opened so often for me the road to happiness.

This, my first love affair, did not give me any experience of the world, for our intercourse was always a happy one, and was never disturbed by any quarrel or stained by any selfish motive. We often felt, all three of us, as if we must raise our souls towards the eternal Providence of God, to thank Him for having by His particular protection kept from us all the accidents which might have disturbed the sweet peace we were enjoying.

I left in the hands of Madame Manzoni all my papers and all the forbidden books I possessed. The good woman, who was twenty years older than I and who, believing in an immutable destiny, took pleasure in turning the leaves of the great book of Fate, told me that she was certain of restoring to me all I left with her before the end of the following year, at the latest. Her prediction caused me both surprise and pleasure, and, feeling deep reverence for her, I thought myself bound to assist the realisation of her foresight. After all, if she predicted the future, it was not through superstition or in consequence of some vain foreboding which reason must condemn, but through her knowledge of the world and of the nature of the person she was addressing. She used to laugh because she never made a mistake.

I embarked from St. Mark's landing. M. Grimani had given me ten sequins, which he thought would keep me during my stay in the lazaretto of Ancona for the necessary quarantine, after which it was not to be supposed that I could want any money. I shared Grimani's certainty on the subject, and, with my natural thoughtlessness, I cared nothing about it. Yet I must say that, unknown to everybody, I had in my purse forty bright sequins, which powerfully contributed to increase my cheerfulness, and I left Venice full of joy and without one regret.

CHAPTER 8

THE ambassador's retinue, which was styled "grand," appeared to me very small. It was composed of a Milanese steward named Carcinelli, of a priest who fulfilled the duties of secretary because the ambassador could not write, of an old woman acting as housekeeper, of a man cook with his ugly wife, and eight or ten servants.

We reached Chiozza about noon. Immediately after landing, I politely asked the steward where I should put up, and his answer was:

"Wherever you please, provided you let this man know where it is, so that he can give you notice when the peotta is ready to sail. My duty," he added, "is to leave you at the lazaretto of Ancona free of expense from the moment we leave this place. Until then enjoy yourself as well as you can."

The man to whom I was to give my address was the captain of the peotta. I asked him to recommend me a lodging.

"You can come to my house," he said, "if you have no objection to share a large bed with the cook, whose wife remains on board."

Unable to devise any better plan, I accepted the offer, and a sailor, carrying my trunk, accompanied me to the dwelling of the honest captain. My trunk had to be placed under the bed, which filled up the room. I was amused at this, for I was not in a position to be over-fastidious, and, after partaking of some dinner at the inn, I went about the town. Chiozza is a peninsula, a seaport belonging to Venice, with a population of ten thousand inhabitants, seamen, fishermen, merchants, lawyers and government clerks.

I entered a coffee-room and had scarcely taken a seat when a young doctor-at-law, with whom I had studied in Padua, came up to me and introduced me to a druggist whose shop was near by, saying that his house was the rendezvous of all the literary men of the place. A few minutes afterwards a tall Jacobin friar, blind of one eye, called Corsini, whom I had known in Venice, came in and paid me many compliments. He told me that I had arrived just in time to go to a picnic got up by the Macaronic academicians for the next day, after a sitting of the academy in which every member was to recite something of his composition. He invited me to join them and to gratify the meeting with the delivery of one of my productions. I accepted the invitation, and, after the reading of ten stanzas which I had written for the occasion, I was unanimously elected a member. My success at the picnic was still greater, for I disposed of such a quantity of macaroni that I was found worthy of the title of prince of the academy.

The young doctor, himself one of the academicians, introduced me to his family. His parents, who were in easy circumstances, received me very kindly. One of his sisters was very amiable, but the other, a professed nun, appeared to me a prodigy of beauty. I might have enjoyed myself in a very agreeable way in the midst of that charming family during my stay in Chiozza, but I suppose that it was my destiny to meet in that place with nothing but sorrows. The young doctor forewarned me that the monk Corsini was a very worthless fellow, despised by everybody, and advised me to avoid him. I thanked him for the information, but my thoughtlessness prevented me from profiting by it. Of a very easy disposition and too giddy to fear any snares, I was foolish enough to believe that the monk would on the contrary be the very man to throw plenty of amusement in my way.

On the third day the worthless dog took me to a house of ill-fame, where I might have gone without his introduction, and, in order to show my mettle, I obliged a low creature whose ugliness ought to have been a sufficient antidote against my fleshly desire. On leaving the place, he brought me for supper to an inn, where we met four scoundrels of his own stamp. After supper one of them began a bank of faro, and I was invited to join in the game. I gave way to that feeling of false pride which so often causes the ruin of young men, and, after losing four sequins, I expressed a wish to retire, but my honest friend, the Jacobin, contrived to make me risk four more sequins in partnership with him. He held the bank, and it was broken. I did not wish to play any more, but Corsini, feigning to pity me and to feel great sorrow at being the cause of my loss, induced me to try myself a bank of twenty-five sequins; my bank was likewise broken. The hope of winning back my money made me keep up the game, and I lost everything I had. Deeply grieved, I went and laid myself down near the cook, who woke up and said I was a libertine.

"You are right," was all I could answer.

I was worn out with fatigue and sorrow and slept soundly. My vile tormentor, the monk, woke me at noon and informed me with a

triumphant joy that a very rich young man had been invited by his friends to supper, that he would be sure to play and to lose and that it would be a good opportunity for me to retrieve my losses.

"I have lost all my money. Lend me twenty sequins."

"When I lend money I am sure to lose; you may call it superstition, but I have tried it too often. Try to find money somewhere else and come. Farewell."

I felt ashamed to confess my position to my friend, and, sending for a money-lender, I emptied my trunk before him. We made an inventory of my clothes, and the honest broker gave me thirty sequins, with the understanding that, if I did not redeem them within three days, all my things would become his property. I am bound to call him an honest man for he advised me to keep three shirts, a few pairs of stockings and a few handkerchiefs; I was disposed to let him take everything, having a presentiment that I would win back all I had lost—a very common error. A few years later I took my revenge by writing a diatribe against presentiments. I am of opinion that the only foreboding in which man can have any sort of faith is the one which forebodes evil because it comes from the mind, while a presentiment of happiness has its origin in the heart, and the heart is a fool worthy of reckoning foolishly upon fickle fortune.

I did not lose any time in joining the honest company, which was alarmed at the thought of not seeing me. Supper went off without any allusion to gambling, but my admirable qualities were highly praised, and it was decided that a brilliant fortune awaited me in Rome. After supper there was no talk of play, but, giving way to my evil genius, I loudly asked for my revenge. I was told that, if I would take the bank, everyone would punt. I took the bank, lost every sequin I had and retired, begging the monk to pay what I owed to the landlord, which he promised to do.

I was in despair, and, to crown my misery, I found out as I was going home that I had met the day before with another living specimen of the Greek woman, less beautiful but as perfidious. I went to bed stunned by my grief, and I believe that I must have fainted into a heavy sleep, which lasted eleven hours; my awaking was that of a miserable being, hating the light of heaven, of which he felt himself unworthy, and I closed my eyes again, trying to sleep for a little while longer. I dreaded to rouse myself entirely, knowing that I would then have to take some decision; but I never once thought of returning to Venice, which would have been the very best thing to do, and I would have destroyed myself rather than confide my sad position to the young doctor. I was weary of my existence and entertained vaguely some hope of starving where I was without leaving my bed. It is certain that I should not have got up if M. Alban, the master of the peotta, had not roused me by calling upon me and informing me that the boat was ready to sail.

The man who is delivered from great perplexity, no matter by what means, feels himself relieved. It seemed to me that Captain Alban had

come to point out the only thing I could possibly do; I dressed in haste and, tying all my worldly possessions in a handkerchief, went on board. Soon afterwards we left the shore and in the morning cast anchor in Orsara, a seaport of Istria. We all landed to visit the city, which would more properly be called a village. It belongs to the Pope, the Republic of Venice having abandoned it to the Holy See.

A young monk of the order of the Recollets, who called himself Friar Stephano of Belun and had obtained a free passage from the devout Captain Alban, joined me as we landed and inquired whether I felt sick.

"Reverend father, I am unhappy."

"You will forget all your sorrow if you will come and dine with me at the house of one of our devout friends."

I had not broken my fast for thirty-six hours, and, having suffered much from seasickness during the night, my stomach was quite empty. My erotic inconvenience made me very uncomfortable, my mind felt deeply the consciousness of my degradation, and I did not possess a groat! I was in such a miserable state that I had no strength to accept or to refuse anything. I was thoroughly torpid and followed the monk mechanically.

He presented me to a lady, saying that he was accompanying me to Rome, where I intended to become a Franciscan. This untruth disgusted me, and under any other circumstances I would not have let it pass without protest, but in my position at the time it struck me as rather comical. The good lady gave us a good dinner of fish cooked in oil, which in Orsara is delicious, and we drank some exquisite *refosco*. During our meal, a priest happened to drop in and, after a short conversation, told me that I ought not to pass the night on board the tartan and pressed me to accept a bed in his house and a good dinner for the next day in case the wind should not allow us to sail; I accepted without hesitation. I offered my most sincere thanks to the good old lady, and the priest took me all over the town. In the evening he brought me to his house where we partook of an excellent supper prepared by his housekeeper, who sat down to the table with us and with whom I was much pleased. The *refosco*, still better than that which I had drunk at dinner, scattered all my misery to the wind, and I conversed gaily with the priest. He offered to read to me a poem of his own composition, but, feeling that my eyes would not keep open, I begged he would excuse me and postpone the reading until the following day.

I went to bed, and in the morning, after ten hours of the most profound sleep, the housekeeper, who had been watching for my awakening, brought me some coffee. I thought her a charming woman, but, alas, I was not in a fit state to prove to her the high estimation in which I held her beauty.

Entertaining feelings of gratitude for my kind host and disposed to listen attentively to his poem, I dismissed all sadness and paid his poetry such compliments that he was delighted, and, finding me much

more talented than he had judged me to be at first, he insisted upon treating me to the reading of his idylls, and I had to swallow them, bearing the infliction cheerfully. The day passed off very agreeably; the housekeeper surrounded me with the kindest attentions, a proof that she was smitten with me; and, giving way to the pleasing idea, I felt that, by a very natural system of reciprocity, she had made my conquest. The good priest thought that the day had passed like lightning, thanks to all the beauties I had discovered in his poetry, which, to speak the truth, was below mediocrity, but time seemed to me to drag along very slowly because the friendly glances of the housekeeper made me long for bedtime, in spite of the miserable condition in which I felt myself morally and physically. But such was my nature; I abandoned myself to joy and happiness when, had I been more reasonable, I ought to have sunk under my load of grief and sadness.

But the golden time came at last. I found the pretty housekeeper full of compliance, but only up to a certain point, and, as she offered some resistance when I showed myself disposed to pay a full homage to her charms, I quietly gave up the undertaking, very well pleased for both of us that it had not been carried any further, and sought my couch in peace. But I had not seen the end of the adventure, for the next morning, when she brought my coffee, her pretty, enticing manners allured me to bestow a few loving caresses upon her, and, if she did not abandon herself entirely, it was only, as she said, because she was afraid of some surprise. The day passed off very pleasantly with the good priest, and at night, the housekeeper no longer fearing detection, and I having on my side taken every precaution necessary in the state in which I was, we passed two most delicious hours. I left Orsara the next morning.

Friar Stephano amused me all day with his talk, which plainly showed me his ignorance, combined with knavery under the veil of simplicity. He showed me the alms he had received in Orsara—bread, wine, cheese, sausages, preserves and chocolate; every nook and cranny of his holy garment was full of provisions.

"Have you received money likewise?" I inquired.

"God forbid! In the first place, our glorious order does not permit me to touch money, and, in the second place, were I to be foolish enough to receive any when I am begging, people would think themselves quit of me with one or two sous, whilst they give me ten times as much in eatables. Believe me, St. Francis was a very judicious man."

I bethought myself that what this monk called wealth would be poverty to me. He offered to share with me and seemed very proud at my consenting to honour him so far.

The tartan touched at the harbour of Pola, called Veruda, and we landed. After a walk up hill of nearly a quarter of an hour, we entered the city, and I devoted a couple of hours to visiting the Roman antiquities, which are numerous. Yet I saw no other trace of grand buildings except the ruins of the arena. We returned to Veruda and went again to sea. On the following day we sighted Ancona, but, the wind being against us, we were compelled to tack about and did not reach the

port till the second day. The harbour of Ancona, although considered one of the great works of Trajan, would be very unsafe if it were not for a causeway which has cost a great deal of money and which makes it somewhat better. I observed a fact worthy of notice, namely, that in the Adriatic the northern coast has many harbours, while the opposite coast can boast of only one or two. It is evident that the sea is retiring by degrees towards the east and that in three or four more centuries Venice must be joined to the land.

We landed at the old lazaretto, where we received the pleasant information that we would go through a quarantine of twenty-eight days because Venice had admitted, after a quarantine of three months, the crew of two ships from Messina, where the plague had recently been raging. I requested a room for myself and for Brother Stephano, who thanked me very heartily. I hired from a Jew a bed, a table and a few chairs, promising to pay for the hire at the expiration of our quarantine. The monk would have nothing but straw. If he had guessed that but for him I might have starved, he would most likely not have felt so much vanity at sharing my room. A sailor, expecting to find in me a generous customer, came to inquire where my trunk was, and, hearing from me that I did not know, he, as well as Captain Alban, went to a great deal of trouble to find it, and I could hardly keep down my merriment when the captain called, begging to be excused for having left it behind and assuring me that he would take care to forward it to me in less than three weeks.

The friar, who had to remain with me four weeks, expected to live at my expense, while, on the contrary, he had been sent by Providence to keep me. He had provisions enough for one week, but it was necessary to think of the future.

After supper I drew a most affecting picture of my position, showing that I should be in need of everything until my arrival at Rome, where I was going, I said, to fill the post of Secretary of Memorials, and my astonishment may be imagined when I saw the blockhead delighted at the recital of my misfortunes.

"I undertake to take care of you until we reach Rome; only tell me whether you can write."

"What a question! Are you joking?"

"Why should I? Look at me; I cannot write anything but my name. True, I can write it with either hand; and what else do I need to know?"

"You astonish me greatly, for I thought you were a priest."

"I am a monk; I say the mass, and, as a matter of course, I must know how to read. St. Francis, whose unworthy son I am, could not read, and that is the reason why he never said a mass. But, as you can write, you will to-morrow pen a letter in my name to the persons whose names I will give you, and I warrant you we shall have enough sent here to live like fighting cocks all through our quarantine."

The next day he made me write eight letters because, in the oral tradition of his order, it is said that, when a monk has knocked at

seven doors and has met with a refusal at every one of them, he must apply to the eighth with perfect confidence because there he is certain of receiving alms. As he had already performed the pilgrimage to Rome, he knew every person in Ancona devoted to the cult of St. Francis and was acquainted with the superiors of all the rich convents. I had to write to every person he named and to set down all the lies he dictated to me. He likewise made me sign the letters for him, saying that, if he signed himself, his correspondents would see that the letters had not been written by him, which would injure him, for, he added, in this age of corruption people will esteem only learned men. He compelled me to fill the letters, even those addressed to ladies, with Latin passages and quotations, and I remonstrated in vain, for, when I raised any objection, he threatened to leave me without anything to eat. I made up my mind to do exactly as he wished. He desired me to write to the superior of the Jesuits that he would not apply to the Capuchins, because they were no better than Atheists and that that was the reason of the great dislike of St. Francis for them. It was in vain that I reminded him of the fact that in the time of St. Francis there were neither Capuchins nor Recollets. His answer was that I had proved myself an ignoramus. I firmly believed that he would be thought a madman and that we should not receive anything, but I was mistaken, for such a quantity of provisions came pouring in that I was amazed. Wine was sent from three or four different quarters, more than enough for us during all our stay, and yet I drank nothing but water, so great was my wish to recover my health. As for eatables, enough was sent in every day for six persons; we gave all our surplus to our keeper, who had a large family. But the monk felt no gratitude for the kind souls who bestowed their charity upon him; all his thanks were reserved for St. Francis.

He undertook to have my linen washed by the keeper; I would not have dared to give it myself, and he said that he had nothing to fear, as everybody was well aware that the monks of his order never wear any kind of linen.

I kept my bed nearly all day and thus avoided showing myself to visitors. The persons who did not come wrote letters full of incongruities cleverly worded, which I took good care not to point out to him. It was with great difficulty that I tried to persuade him that those letters did not require any answer.

A fortnight of repose and severe diet brought me round towards complete recovery, and I began to walk in the yard of the lazaretto from morning till night; but the arrival of a Turk from Thessalonica with his family compelled me to suspend my walks, the ground-floor having been given to him. The only pleasure left me was to spend my time on the balcony overlooking the yard. I soon saw a Greek slave, a girl of dazzling beauty, for whom I felt the deepest interest. She was in the habit of spending the whole day sitting near the door with a book or some embroidery in her hand. If she happened to raise her eyes and meet mine, she modestly bent her head down, and some-

times she rose and went in slowly, as if she meant to say, "I did not know somebody was looking at me." Her figure was tall and slender, her features proclaimed her to be very young; she had a very fair complexion, with beautiful black hair and eyes. She wore the Greek costume, which gave her person a certain air of very exciting voluptuousness.

I was perfectly idle, and, with the temperament which nature and habit had given me, was it likely that I could feast my eyes constantly upon such a charming object without falling desperately in love? I had heard her conversing in *lingua franca* with her master, a fine old man, who, like her, felt very weary of the quarantine and used to come out but seldom, smoking his pipe and remaining in the yard only a short time. I felt a great temptation to address a few words to the beautiful girl, but I was afraid she might run away and never come out again; however, unable to control myself any longer, I determined to write to her; I had no difficulty in conveying the letter, as I had only to let it fall from my balcony. But she might have refused to pick it up, and this is the plan I adopted in order not to risk any unpleasant result.

Availing myself of a moment during which she was alone in the yard, I dropped from my balcony a small piece of paper folded like a letter, but I had taken care not to write anything on it and held the true letter in my hand. As soon as I saw her stooping down to pick up the first, I quickly let the second drop at her feet, and she put both into her pocket. A few minutes afterwards she left the yard. My letter was somewhat to this effect:

"Beautiful angel from the East, I worship you. I will remain all night on this balcony in the hope that you will come to me for a quarter of an hour and listen to my voice through the hole under my feet. We can speak softly, and, in order to hear me, you can climb up to the top of the bale of goods which lies beneath the same hole."

I begged from my keeper not to lock me in as he did every night, and he consented on condition that he would watch me, for, if I had jumped down in the yard, his life might have been the penalty, and he promised not to disturb me on the balcony.

At midnight, as I was beginning to give her up, she came forward. I then laid myself flat on the floor of the balcony and placed my head against the hole, about six inches square. I saw her jump on the bale, and her head reached within a foot of the balcony. She was compelled to steady herself with one hand against the wall for fear of falling, and in that position we talked of love, of ardent desires, of obstacles, of impossibilities and of cunning artifices. I told her the reason for which I dared not jump down in the yard, and she observed that, even without that reason, it would bring ruin upon us, as it would be impossible to get up again, and that, besides, God alone knew what her master would do if he were to find us together. Then, promising to visit me in this way every night, she passed her hand through the hole. Alas! I could not leave off kissing it, for I thought that I had

never in my life touched so soft, so delicate a hand. But what bliss when she begged for mine! I quickly thrust my arm through the hole, so that she could fasten her lips to the bend of the elbow. How many sweet liberties my hand ventured to take! But we were at last compelled by prudence to separate, and, when I returned to my room, I saw with great pleasure that the keeper was fast asleep.

Although I was delighted at having obtained every favour I could possibly wish for in the uncomfortable position we had been in, I racked my brain to contrive the means of securing more complete enjoyment for the following night, but I found during the afternoon that the feminine cunning of my beautiful Greek was more fertile than mine.

Being alone in the yard with her master, she said a few words to him in Turkish, to which he seemed to give his approval, and soon after a servant, assisted by the keeper, brought under the balcony a large basket of goods. She supervised the arrangement, and, in order to secure the basket better, she made the servant place a bale of cotton across two others. Guessing at her purpose, I fairly leaped for joy, for she had found the way of raising herself two feet higher; but I thought that she would then find herself in the most inconvenient position, and that, forced to bend double, she would not be able to resist the fatigue. The hole was not wide enough for her head to pass through, otherwise she might have stood erect and been comfortable. It was necessary at all events to guard against that difficulty; the only way was to tear out one of the planks of the floor of the balcony, but it was not an easy undertaking. Yet I decided upon attempting it, regardless of consequences; and I went to my room to provide myself with a large pair of pincers. Luckily the keeper was absent, and, availing myself of the opportunity, I succeeded in drawing out carefully the four large nails which fastened the plank. Finding that I could lift it at my will, I replaced the pincers and waited for the night with amorous impatience.

The darling girl came exactly at midnight. Noticing the difficulty she experienced in climbing up and in getting a footing upon the third bale of cotton, I lifted the plank and, extending my arm as far as I could, offered her a steady point of support. She stood straight and found herself agreeably surprised, for she could pass her head and her arms through the hole. We wasted no time in empty compliments; we only congratulated each other upon having both worked for the same purpose.

If, the night before, I had found myself master of her person more than she was of mine, this time the position was entirely reversed, but she cursed the man who had packed the bale for not having made it half a foot bigger, so as to get nearer to me. Very likely even that would not have satisfied us, but she would have felt happier.

Our pleasures were barren, yet we kept up our enjoyment until the first streak of light. I put back the plank carefully and lay down in my bed in great need of recruiting my strength.

My dear mistress had informed me that the Turkish *Bairam* began that very morning and would last three days, during which it would be impossible for her to see me.

The night after *Bairam*, she did not fail to make her appearance and, saying that she could not be happy without me, told me that, as she was a Christian woman, I could buy her if I waited for her after leaving the lazzaretto. I was compelled to tell her that I did not possess the means of doing so, and my confession made her sigh. On the following night she informed me that her master would sell her for two thousand piasters, that she would give me the amount, that she was yet a virgin and that I would be pleased with my bargain. She added that she would give me a casket full of diamonds, one of which was alone worth two thousand piasters, and that the sale of the others would place us beyond the reach of poverty for the remainder of our life. She assured me that her master would not notice the loss of the casket and that, if he did, he would never think of accusing her.

I was in love with this girl, and her proposal made me uncomfortable, but, when I woke in the morning, I did not hesitate any longer. She brought the casket in the evening, but I told her that I never could make up my mind to be accessory to a robbery; she was very unhappy and said that my love was not as deep as her own, but that she could not help admiring me for being so good a Christian.

This was the last night; probably we should never meet again. The flame of passion consumed us. She proposed that I should lift her up to the balcony through the open space. Where is the lover who would have objected to so attractive a proposal? I rose and, without being a Milo, placed my hands under her arms and drew her up towards me; my desires are on the point of being fulfilled. Suddenly I feel two hands upon my shoulders, and the voice of the keeper exclaims, "What are you about?" I let my precious burden drop; she regains her chamber, and I, giving vent to my rage, throw myself flat on the floor of the balcony and remain there without a movement, in spite of the shaking of the keeper, whom I was sorely tempted to strangle. At last I rose from the floor and went to bed without uttering one word and not even caring to replace the plank.

In the morning the governor informed us that we were free. As I left the lazzaretto, with a breaking heart, I caught a glimpse of the Greek slave drowned in tears.

I agreed to meet Friar Stephano at the exchange, and I took the Jew from whom I had hired the furniture to the Convent of the Minims, where I received from Father Lazari ten sequins and the address of the bishop, who, after performing quarantine on the frontiers of Tuscany, had proceeded to Rome, where he would expect me to meet him.

I paid the Jew and made a poor dinner at an inn. As I was leaving it to join the monk, I was so unlucky as to meet Captain Alban, who reproached me bitterly for having led him to believe that my trunk had been left behind. I contrived to appease his anger by telling him

all my misfortunes, and I signed a paper in which I declared that I had no claim whatever upon him. I then purchased a pair of shoes and an overcoat and met Stephano, whom I informed of my decision to make a pilgrimage to Our Lady of Loretto. I said I would wait there for him and that we would afterwards travel together as far as Rome. He answered that he did not wish to go through Loretto and that I would repent of my contempt for the grace of St. Francis. I did not alter my mind and left for Loretto the next day in the enjoyment of perfect health.

I reached the Holy City, tired almost to death, for it was the first time in my life that I had walked fifteen miles, drinking nothing but water, although the weather was very warm, because the dry wine used in that part of the country parched me too much. I must observe that, in spite of my poverty, I did not look like a beggar.

As I was entering the city, I saw coming towards me an elderly priest of very respectable appearance, and, as he was evidently taking notice of me, as soon as he drew near, I saluted him and inquired where I could find a comfortable inn. "I cannot doubt," he said, "that a person like you, travelling on foot, must come here from devout motives; come with me." He turned back, I followed him, and he took me to a fine-looking house. After whispering a few words to a man who appeared to be a steward, he left me, saying, very affably, "You shall be well attended to."

My first impression was that I had been mistaken for some other person, but I said nothing.

I was led to a suite of three rooms; the chamber was decorated with damask hangings, the bedstead had a canopy, and the table was supplied with all materials necessary for writing. A servant brought me a light dressing-gown, and another came in with linen and a large tub full of water, which he placed before me; my shoes and stockings were taken off, and my feet washed. A very decent-looking woman, followed by a servant girl, came in a few minutes after and, curtsying very low, proceeded to make my bed. At that moment the Angelus bell was heard; everyone knelt down, and I followed their example. After the prayer a small table was neatly laid out, I was asked what sort of wine I wished to drink, and I was provided with newspapers and two silver candlesticks. An hour afterwards I had a delicious fish supper, and, before I retired to bed, a servant came to inquire whether I would take chocolate in the morning before or after mass.

As soon as I was in bed, the servant brought me a night-lamp with a dial, and I remained alone. Except in France I have never had such a good bed as I had that night. It would have cured the most chronic insomnia, but I was not labouring under such a disease, and I slept for ten hours.

This sort of treatment easily led me to believe that I was not in any kind of hostelry; but where was I? How was I to suppose that I was in a hospital?

When I had taken my chocolate, a hairdresser—quite a fashionable,

dapper fellow—made his appearance, dying to give vent to his chattering propensities. Guessing that I did not wish to be shaved, he offered to clip my soft down with the scissors, saying that I would look younger.

"Why do you suppose that I want to conceal my age?"

"It is very natural because, if your lordship did not wish to do so, your lordship would have shaved long ago. Countess Marcolini is here; does your lordship know her? I must go to her at noon to dress her hair."

I did not feel interested in the Countess Marcolini, and, seeing it, the gossip changed the subject.

"Is this your lordship's first visit to this house? It is the finest hospital throughout the Papal States."

"I quite agree with you, and I shall compliment His Holiness on the establishment."

"Oh! His Holiness knows all about it; he resided here before he became Pope. If Monsignor Caraffa had not been well acquainted with you, he would not have introduced you here."

Such is the use of barbers throughout Europe; but you must not put any questions to them for, if you do, they are sure to treat you to an impudent mixture of truth and falsehood, and, instead of you pumping them, they will worm everything out of you.

Thinking that it was my duty to present my respectful compliments to Monsignor Caraffa, I desired to be taken to his apartment. He gave me a pleasant welcome, showed me his library and entrusted me to the care of one of his abbés, a man of parts, who acted as my *cicerone* everywhere. Twenty years afterwards this same abbé was of great service to me in Rome, and, if still alive, he is a canon of St. John Lateran.

On the following day I took the communion in the Santa Casa. The third day was entirely employed in examining the exterior of this truly wonderful sanctuary, and early the next day I resumed my journey, having spent nothing except three paoli for the barber. Half-way to Macerata, I overtook Brother Stephano walking on at a very slow rate. He was delighted to see me again and told me that he had left Ancona two hours after me, but that he never walked more than three miles a day, being quite satisfied to take two months for a journey which, even on foot, can easily be accomplished in a week. "I want," he said, "to reach Rome without fatigue and in good health. I am in no hurry, and, if you feel disposed to travel with me and in the same quiet way, St. Francis will not find it difficult to keep us both during the journey."

This lazy fellow was a man about thirty, red-haired, very strong and healthy; a true peasant, who had turned himself into a monk only for the sake of living in idle comfort. I answered that, as I was in a hurry to reach Rome, I could not be his travelling companion.

"I undertake to walk six miles, instead of three, to-day," he said, "if you will carry my cloak, which I find very heavy."

The proposal struck me as a rather funny one; I put on his cloak, and he took my greatcoat, but, after the exchange, we cut such a comical figure that every peasant we met laughed at us. His cloak would truly have proved a load for a mule. There were twelve pockets quite full, without taking into account a pocket behind, which he called *il batticulo* and which contained alone twice as much as all the others. Bread, wine, fresh and salt meat, fowls, eggs, cheese, ham, sausages—everything was to be found in those pockets, which contained provisions enough for a fortnight.

I told him how well I had been treated in Loretto, and he assured me that I might have asked Monsignor Caraffa to give me letters for all the hospitals on my road to Rome and that everywhere I would have met with the same reception. "The hospitals," he added, "are all under the curse of St. Francis because the mendicant friars are not admitted in them; but we do not mind their gates being shut against us because they are too far apart from each other. We prefer the homes of the persons attached to our order; these we find everywhere."

"Why do you not ask hospitality in the convents of your order?"

"I am not so foolish. In the first place, I should not be admitted because, being a fugitive, I have not the written obedience which must be shown at every convent, and I should even run the risk of being thrown into prison; your monks are a cursed bad lot. In the second place, I should not be half so comfortable in the convents as I am with our devout benefactors."

"Why and how are you a fugitive?"

He answered my question by the narrative of his imprisonment and flight, the whole story being a tissue of absurdities and lies. The fugitive Recollet friar was a fool, with something of the wit of Harlequin, and he thought that every man listening to him was a greater fool than himself. Yet with all his folly he was not deficient in a certain species of cunning. His religious principles were singular. As he did not wish to be taken for a bigoted man, he was scandalous, and for the sake of making people laugh he would often make use of the most disgusting expressions. He had no taste whatever for women and no inclination towards the pleasures of the flesh; but this was only owing to a deficiency in his natural temperament, and yet he claimed for himself the virtue of continence. On that score, everything appeared to him food for merriment, and, when he had drunk rather too much, he would ask questions of such an indecent character that they would bring blushes to everybody's countenance. Yet the brute would only laugh.

As we were getting within one hundred yards of the house of the devout friend whom he intended to honour with his visit, he took back his heavy cloak. On entering the house he gave his blessing to everybody, and everyone in the family came to kiss his hand. The mistress of the house requested him to say mass for them, and the compliant monk asked to be taken to the vestry, but, when I whispered in

his ear, "Have you forgotten that we have already broken our fast to-day?" he answered sharply, "Mind your own business."

I dared not make any further remark, but during the mass I was indeed surprised, for I saw that he did not understand what he was doing. I could not help being amused at his awkwardness, but I had not yet seen the best part of the comedy. As soon as he had somehow or other finished his mass, he went to the confessional, and, after hearing in confession every member of the family, he took it into his head to refuse absolution to the daughter of his hostess, a girl of twelve or thirteen, pretty and quite charming. He gave his refusal publicly, scolding her and threatening her with the torments of hell. The poor girl, overwhelmed with shame, left the church crying bitterly, and I, feeling real sympathy for her, could not help saying aloud to Stephano that he was a madman. I ran after the girl to offer her my consolations, but she had disappeared and could not be induced to join us at dinner. This piece of extravagance on the part of the monk exasperated me to such an extent that I felt a very strong inclination to thrash him. In the presence of all the family I told him that he was an impostor and the infamous destroyer of the poor child's honour; I challenged him to explain his reasons for refusing to give her absolution, but he closed my lips by answering very coolly that he could not betray the secrets of the confessional. I could eat nothing and was fully determined to leave the scoundrel. As we left the house, I was compelled to accept one paolo as the price of the mock mass he had said. I had to fulfil the sorry duty of his treasurer.

The moment we were on the road, I told him that I was going to part company, because I was afraid of being sent as a felon to the galleys if I continued my journey with him. We exchanged high words; I called him an ignorant scoundrel, he styled me "beggar." I struck him a violent slap on the face, which he returned with a blow from his stick, but I quickly snatched it from him and, leaving him, hastened towards Macerata. A carrier who was going to Tolentino took me with him for two paoli, and for six more I might have reached Foligno in a waggon, but unfortunately a wish for economy made me refuse the offer. I felt well and thought I could easily walk as far as Valcimare, but I arrived there only after five hours of hard walking and thoroughly beaten with fatigue. I was strong and healthy, but a walk of five hours was more than I could bear, because in my infancy I had never gone a league on foot. Young people cannot practise too much the art of walking.

The next day, refreshed by a good night's rest and ready to resume my journey, I wanted to pay the innkeeper, but, alas, a new misfortune was in store for me! Let the reader imagine my sad position! I recollected that I had forgotten my purse, containing seven sequins, on the table of the inn at Tolentino. What a thunderbolt! I was in despair, but I gave up the idea of going back, as it was very doubtful whether I would find my money. Yet it contained all I possessed, save a few copper coins I had in my pocket. I paid my small bill and,

deeply grieved at my loss, continued my journey towards Seraval. I was within three miles of that place when, in jumping over a ditch, I sprained my ankle and was compelled to sit down on the side of the road and wait until someone should come to my assistance.

In the course of an hour a peasant happened to pass with his donkey, and he agreed to carry me to Seraval for one paolo. As I wanted to spend as little as possible, the peasant took me to an ill-looking fellow, who for two paoli, paid in advance, consented to give me a lodging. I asked him to send for a surgeon, but I did not obtain one until the following morning. I had a wretched supper, after which I lay down in a filthy bed. I was in hope that sleep would bring me some relief, but my evil genius was preparing for me a night of torments.

Three men, armed with guns and looking like *banditti*, came in shortly after I had gone to bed, speaking a kind of slang which I could not make out, swearing, raging and paying no attention to me. They drank and sang until midnight, after which they threw themselves down on bundles of straw brought for them, and my host, who was drunk, came, greatly to my dismay, to lie down near me. Disgusted at the idea of having such a fellow for my bed-companion, I refused to let him come, but he answered, with fearful blasphemies, that all the devils in hell could not prevent him from taking possession of his own bed. I was forced to make room for him and exclaimed, "Heavens, where am I?" He told me that I was in the house of the most honest constable in all the Papal States.

Could I possibly have supposed that the peasant would have brought me amongst those accursed enemies of humankind!

He laid himself down near me, but the filthy scoundrel soon compelled me to give him, for certain reasons, such a blow in his chest that he rolled out of bed. He picked himself up, and renewed his beastly attempt. Being well aware that I could not master him without great danger, I got out of bed, thinking myself lucky that he did not oppose my wish, and, crawling along as well as I could, I found a chair, on which I passed the night. At daybreak my tormentor, called up by his honest comrades, joined them in drinking and shouting, and the three strangers, taking their guns, departed. Left alone by the departure of the vile rabble, I passed another unpleasant hour, calling in vain for someone. At last a young boy came in, I gave him some money, and he went for a surgeon. The doctor examined my foot and assured me that three or four days would set me to rights. He advised me to be removed to an inn, and I most willingly followed his counsel. As soon as I was brought to the inn, I went to bed and was well cared for, but my position was such that I dreaded the moment of my recovery. I feared that I should be compelled to sell my coat to pay the innkeeper, and the very thought made me feel ashamed. I began to consider that, if I had controlled my sympathy for the young girl so ill-treated by Stephano, I should not have fallen into this sad predicament, and I felt conscious that my sympathy had been a mistake. If I had put up with the faults of the friar, if this and if

that, and every other *if* was conjured up to torment my restless and wretched brain. Yet I must confess that the thoughts which have their origin in misfortune are not without some advantage to a young man, for they give him the habit of thinking, and the man who does not think never does anything right.

The morning of the fourth day came, and I was able to walk, as the surgeon had predicted; I made up my mind, although reluctantly, to beg the worthy man to sell my greatcoat for me—a most unpleasant necessity, for rain had begun to fall. I owed fifteen paoli to the innkeeper and four to the surgeon. Just as I was going to proffer my painful request, Brother Stephano made his appearance in my room and burst into loud laughter, inquiring whether I had forgotten the blow from his stick!

I was struck with amazement! I begged the surgeon to leave me with the monk, and he immediately complied.

I must ask my readers whether it is possible, in the face of such extraordinary circumstances, not to feel superstitious! What is truly miraculous in this case is the precise minute at which the event took place, for the friar entered the room as the word was hanging on my lips. What surprised me most was the force of Providence, of fortune, of chance—whatever name is given to it—of that very necessary combination which compelled me to find no hope but in that fatal monk, who had begun to be my protective genius in Chiozza at the moment my distress had likewise commenced. And yet, a singular guardian angel, this Stephano! I felt that the mysterious force which threw me into his hands was a punishment rather than a favour.

Nevertheless, he was welcome because I had no doubt of his relieving me from my difficulties, and, whatever might be the power that sent him to me, I felt that I could not do better than to submit to its influence; the destiny of that monk was to escort me to Rome.

"Chi va piano va sano," said the friar as soon as we were alone. He had taken five days to traverse the road over which I had travelled in one day, but he was in good health and had met with no misfortune. He told me that, as he was passing, he had heard that an abbé, secretary to the Venetian ambassador at Rome, was lying ill at the inn, after having been robbed in Valcimara. "I came to see you," he added, "and, as I find you recovered from your illness, we can start again together; I agree to walk six miles every day to please you. Come, let us forget the past and let us be at once on our way."

"I cannot go; I have lost my purse and owe twenty paoli."

"I will go and find the amount in the name of St. Francis."

He returned within an hour, but he was accompanied by the infamous constable, who told me that, if I had let him know who I was, he would have been happy to keep me in his house. "I will give you forty paoli," he continued, "if you will promise me the protection of your ambassador; but, if you do not succeed in obtaining it for me in Rome, you will undertake to repay me. Therefore you must give me an acknowledgment of the debt."

"I have no objection."

Every arrangement was speedily completed; I received the money, paid my debts and left Seraval with Stephano.

About one o'clock in the afternoon we saw a wretched-looking house at a short distance from the road, and the friar said, "It is a good distance from here to Colleforito; we had better put up here for the night." It was in vain that I objected, remonstrating that we were certain of having very poor accommodation; I had to submit to his will. We found a decrepit old man lying on a pallet, two ugly women of thirty or forty, three children entirely naked, a cow and a cursed dog, which barked continually. It was a picture of squalid misery; but the niggardly monk, instead of giving alms to the poor people, asked them to entertain us to supper in the name of St. Francis.

"You must boil the hen," said the dying man to the females, "and bring out of the cellar the bottle of wine which I have kept now for twenty years." As he uttered those few words, he was seized with such a fit of coughing that I thought he would die. The friar went near him and promised him that, by the grace of St. Francis, he would get young and well. Moved by the sight of so much misery, I wanted to continue my journey as far as Colleforito and wait there for Stephano, but the women would not let me go, and I remained. After boiling for four hours, the hen set the strongest teeth at defiance, and the bottle which I uncorked proved to be nothing but sour vinegar. Losing patience, I got hold of the monk's *batticulo* and took out of it enough for a plentiful supper, and I saw the two women opening their eyes very wide at the sight of our provisions.

We all ate with good appetite, and after our supper the women made for us two large beds of fresh straw, and we lay down in the dark, as the last bit of candle to be found in the miserable dwelling was burnt out. We had not been lying on the straw five minutes when Stephano called out to me that one of the women had just lain down near him, and at the same instant the other one takes me in her arms and kisses me. I push her away, and the monk defends himself against the other; but mine, nothing daunted, insists upon lying near me; I get up, the dog springs at my neck, and fear compels me to remain quiet on my straw bed; the monk screams, swears, struggles, the dog barks furiously, the old man coughs; all is noise and confusion. At last Stephano, protected by his heavy garments, shakes off the too loving shrew and, braving the dog, manages to find his stick. Then he lays about to right and left, striking in every direction; one of the women exclaims, "Oh, God!" the friar answers, "She has her quietus." Calm reigns again in the house; the dog, most likely dead, is silent; the old man, who perhaps has received his death-blow, coughs no more; the children sleep, and the women, afraid of the singular caresses of the monk, sheer off into a corner; the remainder of the night passed off quietly.

At daybreak I rose; Stephano was likewise soon up. I looked all round, and my surprise was great when I found that the women

had gone out, and, seeing that the old man gave no sign of life, and had a bruise on his forehead, I showed it to Stephano, remarking that very likely he had killed him.

"It is possible," he answered, "but I did not do it intentionally."

Then taking up his *batticulo* and finding it empty he flew into a violent passion; but I was much pleased, for I had been afraid that the women had gone out to get assistance and to have us arrested, and the robbery of our provisions reassured me, as I felt certain that the poor wretches had betaken themselves out of the way so as to secure impunity for their theft. But I laid great stress upon the danger we should run by remaining any longer, and I succeeded in frightening the friar out of the house. We soon met a waggoner going to Folligno; I persuaded Stephano to take the opportunity of putting a good distance between us and the scene of our last adventures; and, as we were eating our breakfast at Folligno, we saw another waggon, quite empty, got a lift in it for a trifle and thus rode to Pisignano, where a devout person gave us a charitable welcome, and I slept soundly through the night without the dread of being arrested.

Early the next day we reached Spoleti, where Brother Stephano had two benefactors, and, careful not to give either of them a cause of jealousy, he favoured both; we dined with the first, who entertained us like princes, and had supper and lodging in the house of the second, a wealthy wine merchant and the father of a large and delightful family. He gave us a delicious supper, and everything would have gone on pleasantly, had not the friar, already excited by his good dinner, made himself quite drunk. In that state, thinking to please his new host, he began to abuse the other, greatly to my annoyance; he said the wine he had given us to drink was adulterated and that the man was a thief. I gave him the lie to his face and called him a scoundrel. The host and his wife pacified me, saying that they were well acquainted with their neighbour and knew what to think of him; but the monk threw his napkin at my face, and the host took him very quietly by the arm and put him to bed in a room in which he locked him up. I slept in another room.

In the morning I rose early and was considering whether it would not be better to go alone when the friar, who had slept himself sober, made his appearance and told me that we ought for the future to live together like good friends and not to give way to angry feeling; I followed my destiny once more. We resumed our journey, and at Soma the innkeeper, a woman of rare beauty, gave us a good dinner and some excellent Cyprus wine, which the Venetian couriers exchanged with her against delicious truffles found in the vicinity of Soma, which sold for a good price in Venice. I did not leave the handsome innkeeper without losing a part of my heart.

It would be difficult to draw a picture of the indignation which overpowered me when, as we were about two miles from Terni, the infamous friar showed me a small bag full of truffles which the scoundrel had stolen from the amiable woman by way of thanks for her

generous hospitality. The truffles were worth two sequins at least. In my indignation I snatched the bag from him, saying that I would certainly return it to its lawful owner. But, as he had not committed the robbery to give himself the pleasure of making restitution, he threw himself upon me, and we came to a regular fight. But victory did not remain long in abeyance; I forced his stick out of his hands, knocked him into a ditch and went off. On reaching Terni, I wrote a letter of apology to our beautiful hostess of Soma and sent back the truffles.

From Terni I went on foot to Otricoli, where I stayed only long enough to examine the fine old bridge, and from there I paid four paoli to a waggoner who carried me to Castel Nuovo, from which place I walked to Rome. I reached the celebrated city on the 1st of September at nine in the morning.

I must not forget to mention here a rather peculiar circumstance which, however ridiculous it may be in reality, will please many of my readers. An hour after I had left Castel Nuovo, the atmosphere being calm and the sky clear, I perceived on my right and within ten paces of me, a pyramidal flame about two feet long and four or five feet above the ground. This apparition surprised me because it seemed to accompany me. Anxious to examine it, I endeavoured to get nearer to it, but, the more I advanced towards it, the further it went from me. It would stop when I stood still, and, when the road along which I was travelling happened to be lined with trees, I no longer saw it, but it was sure to reappear as soon as I had reached a portion of the road without trees. I several times retraced my steps purposely, but every time I did so the flame disappeared and would not show itself again until I proceeded towards Rome. This extraordinary beacon left me when daylight chased darkness from the sky.

What a splendid field for ignorant superstition if there had been any witnesses to that phenomena and if I had chanced to make a great name in Rome! History is full of such trifles, and the world is full of people who attach great importance to them, in spite of the so-called light of science. I must candidly confess that, although somewhat versed in physics, the sight of that small meteor gave me singular ideas. But I was prudent enough not to mention the circumstance to any one.

When I reached the ancient capital of the world, I possessed only seven paoli, and consequently I did not loiter about. I paid no attention to the splendid entrance through the Gate of the Poplar, which is by mistake pompously called of the People, or to the beautiful square of the same name or to the portals of the magnificent churches or to all the stately buildings which generally strike the traveller as he enters the city. I went straight towards Monte Magnanopoli, where, according to the address given to me, I was to find the bishop. There I was informed that he had left Rome ten days before, leaving instructions to send me to Naples free of expense. A coach was to start for Naples the next day; not caring to see Rome, I went to bed until the time for the departure of the coach. I travelled with three low fellows, to whom I

did not address one word through the whole of the journey. I entered Naples on the 6th day of September.

I went immediately to the address which had been given to me in Rome; the bishop was not there. I called at the Convent of the Minims and found that he had left Naples to proceed to Martorano. I inquired whether he had left any instructions for me, but all in vain, no one could give me any information. And there I was, alone in a large city without a friend, with eight carlini in my pocket and not knowing what to do! But never mind; fate calls me to Martorano, and to Martorano I must go. The distance, after all, is only two hundred miles.

I found several drivers starting for Cosenza, but, when they heard that I had no luggage, they refused to take me unless I paid in advance. They were quite right, but their prudence placed me under the necessity of going on foot. Yet I felt I must reach Martorano, and I made up my mind to walk the distance, begging food and lodging like the very reverend Brother Stephano.

First of all I made a light meal for one-fourth of my money, and, having been informed that I had to follow the Salerno road, I went towards Portici, where I arrived in an hour and a half. I already felt rather fatigued; my legs, if not my head, took me to an inn, where I ordered a room and some supper. I was served in good style, my appetite was excellent, and I passed a quiet night in a comfortable bed. In the morning I told the innkeeper that I would return for my dinner, and I went out to visit the royal palace. As I passed through the gate, I was met by a man of prepossessing appearance, dressed in the eastern fashion, who offered to show me all over the palace, saying that I would thus save my money. I was in a position to accept any offer; I thanked him for his kindness.

Happening during the conversation to state that I was a Venetian, he told me that he was my subject, since he came from Zante. I acknowledged his polite compliment with a reverence.

"I have," he said, "some very excellent muscatel wine grown in the East, which I could sell you cheap."

"I might buy some, but I warn you I am a good judge."

"So much the better. Which do you prefer?"

"The Cerigo wine."

"You are right. I have some rare Cerigo muscatel, and we can taste it if you have no objection to dine with me."

"None whatever."

"I can likewise give you the wines of Samos and Cephalonia. I have also a quantity of minerals, plenty of vitriol, cinnabar, antimony and one hundred quintals of mercury."

"Are all these goods here?"

"No, they are in Naples. Here I have only the muscatel wine and the mercury."

It is quite naturally and without any intention to deceive that a young man, accustomed to poverty and ashamed of it when he speaks to a rich stranger, boasts of his means, of his fortune. As I was talking

with my new acquaintance, I recollected an amalgam of mercury with lead and bismuth, by which the mercury increases one-fourth in weight. I said nothing, but I bethought myself that, if the mystery should be unknown to the Greek, I might profit by it. I felt that some cunning was necessary and that he would not care for my secret if I proposed to sell it to him without preparing the way. The best plan was to astonish my man with the miracle of the augmentation of the mercury, treat it as a jest, and see what his intentions would be. Cheating is a crime, but honest cunning may be considered as a species of prudence. True, it is a quality which is near akin to roguery, but that cannot be helped; and the man who in time of need does not know how to exercise his cunning nobly is a fool. The Greeks call this sort of wisdom *cerdaleophron* from the word *cerdo*, fox, and it might be translated by "foxiness."

After we had visited the palace, we returned to the inn, and the Greek took me to his room, in which he ordered the table to be laid for two. In the next room I saw several large vessels of muscatel wine and four flagons of mercury, each containing about ten pounds. My plans were laid, and I asked him to let me have one of the flagons of mercury at the current price and took it to my room. The Greek went out to attend to his business, reminding me that he expected me to dinner. I went out likewise and bought two pounds and a half of lead and an equal quantity of bismuth; the druggist had no more. I came back to the inn, asked for some large empty bottles and made the amalgam.

We dined very pleasantly, and the Greek was delighted because I pronounced his Cerigo excellent. In the course of conversation he inquired laughingly why I had bought one of his flagons of mercury.

"You can find out if you come to my room," I said.

After dinner we repaired to my room, and he found his mercury divided in two vessels. I asked for a piece of chamois leather, strained the liquid through it, filled his own flagon, and the Greek stood astounded at the sight of the fine mercury, about one-fourth of a flagon, which remained over, with an equal quantity of a powder unknown to him; it was the bismuth. My merry laugh kept company with his astonishment, and, calling one of the servants of the inn, I sent him to the druggist to sell the mercury that was left. He returned in a few minutes and handed me fifteen carlini.

The Greek, whose surprise was complete, asked me to give him back his own flagon, which was there quite full and worth sixty carlini. I handed it to him with a smile, thanking him for the opportunity he had afforded me of earning fifteen carlini, and took care to add that I should leave for Salerno early the next morning.

"Then we must have supper together this evening," he said.

During the afternoon we took a walk towards Mount Vesuvius. Our conversation went from one subject to another, but no allusion was made to the mercury, though I could see that the Greek had something on his mind. At supper he told me jestingly that I ought to stop in Portici the next day to make forty-five carlini out of the three other flagons of mercury. I answered gravely that I did not want the money

and that I had augmented the first flagon only for the sake of procuring him an agreeable surprise.

"But," said he, "you must be very wealthy."

"No, I am not, because I am in search of the secret of the augmentation of gold, and it is a very expensive study for us."

"How many are there in your company?"

"Only my uncle and myself."

"What do you want to augment gold for? The augmentation of mercury ought to be enough for you. Pray tell me whether the mercury augmented by you to-day is again susceptible of a similar increase."

"No, if it were so, it would be an immense source of wealth for us."

"I am much pleased with your sincerity."

Supper over, I paid my bill and asked the landlord to get me a carriage and pair of horses to take me to Salerno early the next morning. I thanked the Greek for his delicious muscatel wine and, requesting his address in Naples, assured him that he would see me within a fortnight, as I was determined to secure a cask of his Cerigo.

We embraced each other, and I retired to bed, well pleased with my day's work and in no way astonished at the Greek's not offering to purchase my secret for I was certain that he would not sleep for anxiety and that I should see him early in the morning. At all events, I had enough money to reach Tour du Grec, and there Providence would take care of me. Yet it seemed to me very difficult to travel as far as Martorano, begging like a mendicant friar, because my outward appearance did not excite pity; people would feel interested in me only from a conviction that I needed nothing—a very unfortunate conviction when the object of it is truly poor.

As I had foreseen, the Greek was in my room at daybreak. I received him in a friendly way, saying that we could take coffee together.

"Willingly; but tell me, reverend abbé, whether you would feel disposed to sell me your secret?"

"Why not? When we meet in Naples—"

"But why not now?"

"I am awaited in Salerno; besides, I would sell the secret only for a large sum of money, and I am not acquainted with you."

"That does not matter, as I am sufficiently known here to pay you in cash. How much would you want?"

"Two thousand ounces."

"I agree to pay you that sum, provided that I succeed in making the augmentation myself with such matter as you name to me, which I will purchase."

"It is impossible, because the necessary ingredients cannot be got here; but they are common enough in Naples."

"If it is any sort of metal, we can get it at the Tour du Grec. We could go there together. Can you tell me what is the expense of the augmentation?"

"One and a half per cent; but are you likewise known at Tour du Grec, for I should not like to waste my time?"

"Your doubts grieve me."

Saying which, he took a pen, wrote a few words and handed to me this order:

"At sight, pay to bearer the sum of fifty gold ounces, on account of Panagiotti."

He told me that the banker resided within two hundred yards of the inn, and he pressed me to go there myself. I did not stand upon ceremony, but went to the banker, who paid me the amount. I returned to my room, in which he was waiting for me, and placed the gold on the table, saying that we could now proceed together to Tour du Grec, where we would complete our arrangements after the signature of a deed of agreement. The Greek had his own carriage and horses; he gave orders for them to be got ready, and we left the inn; but he had nobly insisted upon my taking possession of the fifty ounces.

When we arrived at Tour du Grec, he signed a document by which he promised to pay me two thousand ounces as soon as I should have discovered to him the process of augmenting mercury by one-fourth without injuring its quality, the amalgam to be equal to the mercury which I had sold in his presence at Portici.

He then gave me a bill of exchange payable at sight in eight days on M. Genaro de Carlo. I told him that the ingredients were lead and bismuth; the first combining with mercury and the second giving to the whole the perfect fluidity necessary to strain it through the chamois leather. The Greek went out to try the amalgam some place or other, and I dined alone, but towards evening he came back, looking very disconsolate, as I had expected.

"I have made the amalgam," he said, "but the mercury is not perfect."

"It is equal to that which I sold in Portici, and that is the very letter of your engagement."

"But my engagement says likewise 'without injury to the quality.' You must agree that the quality is injured because it is no longer susceptible of further augmentation."

"You knew that to be the case; the point is its equality with the mercury I sold in Portici. But we shall have to go to law, and you will lose. I am sorry the secret should become public. Congratulate yourself, sir, for, if you should gain the lawsuit, you will have obtained my secret for nothing. I would never have believed you capable of deceiving me in such a manner."

"Reverend sir, I can assure you that I would not willingly deceive anyone."

"Do you know the secret or do you not? Do you suppose I would have given it to you without the agreement we entered into? Well, there will be some fun over this affair in Naples, and the lawyers will make money out of it. But I am much grieved at this turn of affairs and very sorry that I allowed myself to be so easily deceived by your fine talk. In the meantime, here are your fifty ounces."

As I was taking the money out of my pocket, frightened to death lest

he should accept it, he left the room, saying that he would not have it. He soon returned; we had supper in the same room, but at separate tables; war had been openly declared, but I felt certain that a treaty of peace would soon be signed. We did not exchange one word during the evening, but in the morning he came to me as I was getting ready to go. I again offered to return the money I had received, but he told me to keep it and proposed to give me fifty ounces more if I would give him back his bill of exchange for two thousand. We began to argue the matter quietly, and after two hours of discussion I gave in. I received fifty ounces more, we dined together like old friends and embraced each other cordially. As I was bidding him adieu, he gave me an order on his house at Naples for a barrel of muscatel wine and presented me with a splendid box containing twelve razors with silver handles, manufactured in Tour du Grec. We parted the best friends in the world and well pleased with each other.

I remained two days in Salerno to provide myself with linen and other necessities. Possessing about one hundred sequins and enjoying good health, I was very proud of my success, in which I could not see any cause of reproach to myself, for the cunning I had brought into play to insure the sale of my secret could not be found fault with except by the most intolerant of moralists, and such men have no authority to speak on matters of business. At all events, free, rich and certain of presenting myself before the bishop with a respectable appearance and not like a beggar, I soon recovered my natural spirits and congratulated myself upon having bought sufficient experience to insure me against falling a second time an easy prey to a Father Corsini, to thieving gamblers, to mercenary women and particularly to the impudent scoundrels who barefacedly praise so well those they intend to dupe—a species of knave very common in the world, even amongst people who form what is called good society.

I left Salerno with two priests who were going to Cosenza on business, and we traversed the distance of one hundred and forty-two miles in twenty-two hours. The day after my arrival in the capital of Calabria, I took a small carriage and drove to Martorano. During the journey, fixing my eyes upon the famous Mare Ausonium, I felt delighted at finding myself in the middle of Magna Grecia, rendered so celebrated for twenty-four centuries by its connection with Pythagoras. I looked with astonishment upon a country renowned for its fertility and in which, in spite of nature's prodigality, my eyes met everywhere the aspect of terrible misery, the complete absence of that pleasant superfluity which helps man to enjoy life and the degradation of the inhabitants sparsely scattered on a soil where they ought to be so numerous; I felt ashamed to acknowledge them as originating from the same stock as myself. Such is, however, the Terra di Lavoro where labour seems to be execrated, where everything is cheap, where the miserable inhabitants consider that they have made a good bargain when they have found anyone disposed to take care of the fruit which the ground supplies almost spontaneously in too great abundance and for which there is no

market. I felt compelled to admit the justice of the Romans who had called them "Brutes" instead of "Brutians." The good priests with whom I had been travelling laughed at my dread of the tarantula and of the charybdis, for the disease brought on by the bite of those insects appeared to me more fearful even than a certain disease with which I was already too well acquainted. They assured me that all the stories relating to those creatures were fables; they laughed at the lines which Virgil has devoted to them in the *Georgics* as well as at all those I quoted to justify my fears.

I found Bishop Bernard de Bernardis occupying a hard chair near an old table, on which he was writing. I fell on my knees, as it is customary to do before a prelate, but, instead of giving me his blessing, he raised me up from the floor and, folding me in his arms, embraced me tenderly. He expressed his deep sorrow when I told him that in Naples I had not been able to find any instructions to enable me to join him, but his face lighted up again when I added that I was indebted to no one for money and was in good health. He bade me take a seat and with a heavy sigh began to talk of his poverty and ordered a servant to lay the cloth for three persons. Besides this servant, His Lordship's suite consisted of a most devout-looking housekeeper and of a priest, whom I judged to be very ignorant from the few words he uttered during our meal. The house inhabited by His Lordship was large, but badly built and poorly kept. The furniture was so miserable that, in order to make up a bed for me in the room adjoining his chamber, the poor bishop had to give up one of his two mattresses! His dinner, not to say any more about it, frightened me, for he was very strict in keeping the rules of his order, and, this being a fast day, he did not eat any meat, and the oil was very bad. Nevertheless, monsignor was an intelligent man and, what is still better, an honest man. He told me, much to my surprise, that his bishopric, although not one of little importance, brought him in only five hundred *ducati di regno* yearly and that, unfortunately, he had contracted debts to the amount of six hundred. He added, with a sigh, that his only happiness was to feel himself out of the clutches of the monks, who had persecuted him and made his life a perfect purgatory for fifteen years. All these confidences caused me sorrow and mortification because they proved to me, not only that I was not in the promised land where a mitre could be picked up, but also that I would be a heavy charge for him. I felt that he was grieved himself at the sorry present his patronage seemed likely to prove.

I inquired whether he had a good library, whether there were any literary men or any good society in which one could spend a few agreeable hours. He smiled and answered that throughout his diocese there was not one man who could boast of writing decently and still less of any taste or knowledge in literature, that there was not a single bookseller, nor any person caring even for the newspapers. But he promised me that we would follow our literary tastes together as soon as he received the books he had ordered from Naples. That was all very well, but was this the place for a young man of eighteen to live in, without a

good library, without good society, without emulation and literary intercourse? The good bishop, seeing me full of sad thoughts and almost astounded at the prospect of the miserable life I should have to lead with him, tried to give me courage by promising to do everything in his power to secure my happiness.

The next day, the bishop having to officiate in his pontifical robes, I had an opportunity of seeing all the clergy and all the faithful of the diocese, men and women, of whom the cathedral was full; the sight made me resolve at once to leave Martorano. I thought I was gazing upon a troop of brutes, for whom my external appearance was a cause of scandal. How ugly were the women! What a look of stupidity and coarseness in the men! When I returned to the bishop's house, I told the prelate that I did not feel in me the vocation to die within a few months a martyr in this miserable city.

"Give me your blessing," I added, "and let me go—or, rather, come with me. I promise you that we shall make a fortune somewhere else."

The proposal made him laugh repeatedly during the day. Had he agreed to it, he would not have died two years afterwards in the prime of manhood. The worthy man, feeling how natural was my repugnance, begged me to forgive him for having summoned me to him, and, considering it his duty to send me back to Venice, having no money himself and not being aware that I had any, he told me that he would give me an introduction to a worthy citizen of Naples who would lend me sixty *ducati di regno* to enable me to reach my native city. I accepted his offer with gratitude and, going to my room, took out of my trunk the case of fine razors which the Greek had given me and begged his acceptance of it as a souvenir of me. I had great difficulty in forcing it upon him for it was worth the sixty ducats, and, to conquer his resistance, I had to threaten to remain with him if he refused my present. He gave me a very flattering letter of recommendation for the Archbishop of Cosenza, in which he requested him to forward me as far as Naples without any expense to myself. It was thus that I left Martorano sixty hours after my arrival, pitying the bishop whom I was leaving behind, and who wept as he was pouring heartfelt blessings upon me.

The Archbishop of Cosenza, a man of wealth and intelligence, offered me a room in his palace. During the dinner, I made, with an overflowing heart, the eulogy of the Bishop of Martorano; but I railed mercilessly at his diocese and at the whole of Calabria in so cutting a manner that I greatly amused the archbishop and all his guests, amongst whom were two ladies, his relatives, who did the honours of the dinner-table. The youngest, however, objected to the satirical style in which I had depicted her country and declared war against me; but I contrived to obtain peace again by telling her that Calabria would be a delightful country if one-fourth only of its inhabitants were like her. Perhaps it was with the idea of proving to me that I had been wrong in my opinion that the archbishop gave on the following day a splendid supper.

Cosenza is a city in which a gentleman can find plenty of amusement; the nobility are wealthy, the women are pretty and the men generally

well-informed because they have been educated in Naples or in Rome.

I left Cosenza on the third day with a letter from the archbishop for the far-famed Genovesi.

I had five travelling companions, whom I judged from their appearance to be either pirates or *banditti*, and I took very good care not to let them see or guess that I had a well filled purse. I likewise thought it prudent to go to bed without undressing during the whole journey—an excellent measure of prudence for a young man travelling in that part of the country.

I reached Naples on the 16th of September, 1743, and lost no time in presenting the letter of the Bishop of Martorano. It was addressed to a M. Gennaro Polo at Saint Anne's. This excellent man, whose duty was only to give me the sum of sixty ducats, insisted, after perusing the bishop's letter, upon receiving me in his house because he wished me to make the acquaintance of his son, who was a poet like myself. The bishop had represented my poetry as sublime. After the usual ceremonies I accepted his kind invitation, my trunk was sent for, and I was a guest in the house of M. Gennaro Polo.

CHAPTER 9

I HAD no difficulty in answering the various questions which Doctor Gennaro addressed to me, but I was surprised, and even displeased, at the constant peals of laughter with which he received my answers. The piteous description of miserable Calabria and the picture of the sad situation of the Bishop of Martorano appeared to me more suited to call forth tears than to excite hilarity, and, suspecting that some mystification was being played upon me, I was very near getting angry when, becoming more composed, he told me with feeling that I must kindly excuse him, that his laughter was a disease which seemed to be endemic in his family, for one of his uncles had died of it.

"What!" I exclaimed, "died of laughing?"

"Yes. This disease, which was not known to Hippocrates, is called *li flatì*."

"What do you mean? Does an hypochondriac affection which causes sadness and lowness in all those who suffer from it render you cheerful?"

"Yes, because, most likely, my *flatì*, instead of influencing the hypochondrium, affect my spleen, which my physician asserts to be the organ of laughter. It is quite a discovery."

"You are mistaken; it is a very ancient notion, and it is the only function which is ascribed to the spleen in our animal organisation."

"Well, we must discuss the matter at length, for I hope you will remain with us a few weeks."

"I wish I could, but I must leave Naples to-morrow or the day after."

"Have you any money?"

"I rely upon the sixty ducats you have to give me."

At these words, his peals of laughter began again, and, as he could see that I was annoyed, he said, "I am amused at the idea that I can keep you here as long as I like. But be good enough to see my son; he writes fairly pretty verses."

And truly his son, although only fourteen, was already a great poet.

A servant took me to the apartment of the young man, whom I found possessed of a pleasing countenance and engaging manners. He gave me a polite welcome and begged to be excused if he could not attend to me altogether for the present, as he had to finish a song which he was composing for a relative of the Duchess de Bovino, who was taking the veil at the Convent of St. Claire, and the printer was waiting for the manuscript. I told him that his excuse was a very good one, and I offered to assist him. He then read his song, and I found it so full of enthusiasm and so truly in the style of Guidi that I advised him to call it an ode; but, as I had praised all the truly beautiful passages, I thought I could venture to point out the weak ones, and I replaced them by verses of my own composition. He was delighted and thanked me warmly, inquiring whether I was Apollo. As he was writing his ode, I composed a sonnet on the same subject, and, expressing his admiration for it, he begged me to sign it and to allow him to send it with his poetry.

While I was correcting and recopying my manuscript, he went to his father to find out who I was, which made the old man laugh until supper-time. In the evening I had the pleasure of seeing that my bed had been prepared in the young man's chamber.

Doctor Gennaro's family was composed of his son and a daughter, unfortunately very plain, his wife and two elderly, devout sisters. Amongst the guests at the supper-table I met several literary men and the Marquis Galiani, who was at that time annotating Vitruvius. He had a brother, an abbé, whose acquaintance I made twenty years after in Paris, where he was secretary of embassy to Count Cantillana. The next day at supper I was presented to the celebrated Genovesi; I had already sent him the letter of the Archbishop of Cosenza. He spoke to me of Apostolo Zeno and of the Abbé Conti. He remarked that it was considered a very venial sin for a regular priest to say two masses in one day for the sake of earning two carlini more, but that for the same sin a secular priest would deserve to be burnt at the stake.

The nun took the veil on the following day, and Gennaro's ode and my sonnet had the greatest success. A Neapolitan gentleman, whose name was the same as mine, expressed a wish to know me and, hearing that I resided at the doctor's, called to congratulate him on the occasion of his feast-day, which happened to fall on the day following the ceremony at St. Claire.

Don Antonio Casanova, informing me of his name, inquired whether my family was originally from Venice.

"I am, sir," I answered modestly, "the great-grandson of the unfortunate Marco Antonio Casanova, secretary to Cardinal Pompeo Colonna, who died of the plague in Rome in the year 1528, under the pontificate

of Clement VII." The words were scarcely out of my lips when he embraced me, calling me his cousin, but we all thought that Doctor Gennaro would actually die with laughter, for it seemed impossible to laugh so immoderately without risk of life. Madame Gennaro was very angry and told my newly found cousin that he might have avoided enacting such a scene before her husband, knowing his disease, but he answered that he never thought the circumstance likely to provoke mirth. I said nothing, for in reality I felt that the recognition was very comic. Our poor laughter having recovered his composure, Casanova, who had remained very serious, invited me to dinner for the next day with my young friend Paul Gennaro, who had already become my *alter ego*.

When we called at his house, my worthy cousin showed me his family tree, beginning with a Don Francisco, brother of Don Juan. In my pedigree, which I knew by heart, Don Juan, my direct ancestor, was a posthumous child. It was possible that there might have been a brother of Marco Antonio's; but, when he heard that my genealogy began with Don Francisco from Aragon, who had lived in the fourteenth century, and that consequently all the pedigree of the illustrious house of the Casanovas of Saragossa belonged to him, his joy knew no bounds; he did not know what to do to convince me that the same blood was flowing in his veins and in mine.

He expressed some curiosity to know what lucky accident had brought me to Naples; I told him that, having embraced the ecclesiastical profession, I was going to Rome to seek my fortune. He then presented me to his family, and I thought that I could read on the countenance of my cousin, his dearly beloved wife, that she was not much pleased with the newly found relationship, but his pretty daughter and a still prettier niece of his might very easily have given me faith in the doctrine that blood is thicker than water, however fabulous it may be.

After dinner Don Antonio informed me that the Duchess de Bovino had expressed a wish to know the Abbé Casanova who had written the sonnet in honour of her relative and that he would be very happy to introduce me to her as his own cousin. As we were alone at the moment, I begged he would not insist on presenting me, as I was provided only with travelling suits and had to be careful of my purse so as not to arrive in Rome without money. Delighted at my confidence and approving my economy, he said, "I am rich, and you must not scruple to come with me to my tailor." And he accompanied his offer with an assurance that the circumstance would not be known to anyone and that he would feel deeply mortified if I denied him the pleasure of serving me. I shook him warmly by the hand and answered that I was ready to do anything he pleased. We went to a tailor, who took my measure and brought me on the following day everything necessary to the toilet of the most elegant abbé. Don Antonio called on me and remained to dine with Don Gennaro, after which he took me and my friend Paul to the duchess. This lady, according to the Neapolitan fashion, called

arrange it otherwise if he liked. The answer made the two ladies smile, particularly the one whom I preferred, and it seemed to me a good omen.

We were five at supper, for it is usual for the *vetturino* to supply his travellers with their meals unless some private agreement is made otherwise and to sit down at table with them. In the desultory talk which went on during the supper I found in my travelling companions decorum, propriety, wit and the manners of persons accustomed to good society. I became curious to know who they were, and, going down with the driver after supper, I asked him.

"The gentleman," he told me, "is an advocate, and one of the ladies is his wife, but I do not know which of the two."

I went back to our room and was polite enough to go to bed first, in order to make it easier for the ladies to undress with freedom; I likewise got up the first in the morning, left the room and returned only when I was called for breakfast. The coffee was delicious. I praised it highly, and the lady, the one who was my favourite, promised that I should have the same every morning during our journey. The barber came in after breakfast; the advocate was shaved, and the barber offered me his services, which I declined, but the rogue declared that it was slovenly to let one's beard grow.

When we had resumed our seats in the coach, the advocate made some remark upon the impudence of barbers in general.

"But we ought to decide first," said the lady, "whether or no it is slovenly to go bearded."

"Of course it is," said the advocate. "A beard is nothing but a dirty excrescence."

"You may think so," I answered, "but everybody does not share your opinion. Do we consider a dirty excrescence the hair of which we take so much care and which is of the same nature as the beard? Far from it; we admire the length and the beauty of the hair."

"Then," remarked the lady, "the barber is a fool."

"But after all," I asked, "have I any beard?"

"I thought you had," she answered.

"In that case I will begin to shave as soon as I reach Rome, for this is the first time that I have been reproached for having a beard."

"My dear wife," exclaimed the advocate, "you should have held your tongue; perhaps the reverend abbé is going to Rome with the intention of becoming a Capuchin friar."

The pleasantry made me laugh, but, unwilling that he should have the last word, I answered that he had guessed rightly, that such had been my intention, but that I had entirely altered my mind since I had seen his wife.

"Oh! you are wrong," said the joyous Neapolitan, "for my wife is very fond of Capuchins, and, if you wish to please her, you had better follow your original vocation."

Our conversation continued in the same tone of pleasantry, and the day passed off in an agreeable manner; in the evening we had a very

poor supper at Garillan, but we made up for it by cheerfulness and witty conversation. My dawning inclination for the advocate's wife borrowed strength from the affectionate manner she displayed towards me.

The next day she asked me, after we had resumed our journey, whether I intended to make a long stay in Rome before returning to Venice. I answered that, having no acquaintance in Rome, I was afraid my life there would be very dull.

"Strangers are liked in Rome," she said. "I feel certain that you will be pleased with your residence in that city."

"May I hope, madame, that you will allow me to pay you my respects?"

"We shall be honoured by your calling upon us," said the advocate.

My eyes were fixed upon his charming wife. She blushed, but I did not appear to notice it. I kept up the conversation, and the day passed as pleasantly as the previous one. We stopped at Terracina, where they gave us a room with three beds—two single beds and a large one between the two others. It was natural that the two sisters should take the large bed; they did so and undressed while the advocate and I went on talking at the table, with our backs turned to them.

As soon as they had gone to rest, the advocate took the bed on which he found his nightcap, and I the other, which was only about one foot distant from the large bed. I remarked that the lady by whom I was captivated was on the side nearest my couch, and, without much vanity, I could suppose that it was not owing only to chance.

I put the light out and lay down, revolving in my mind a project which I could not abandon and yet durst not execute. In vain did I court sleep. A very faint light enabled me to perceive the bed in which the pretty woman was lying, and my eyes would, in spite of myself, remain open. It would be difficult to guess what I might have done at last (I had already fought a hard battle with myself for more than an hour), when I saw her rise, get out of her bed and go and lay herself down near her husband, who most likely did not wake up and continued to sleep in peace, for I heard nothing.

Vexed, disgusted, I tried to compose myself to sleep and did not wake until daybreak. Seeing the beautiful wandering star in her own bed, I got up, dressed in haste and went out, leaving all my companions fast asleep. I did not return to the inn until the time fixed for our departure, and I found the advocate and the two ladies already in the coach, waiting for me.

The lady complained in a very obliging manner of my not having cared for her coffee; I pleaded as an excuse a desire for an early walk and took care not to honour her even with a look; I feigned to be suffering from the toothache and remained in my corner, dull and silent. At Piperno she managed to whisper to me that my toothache was all sham; I was pleased with the reproach because it heralded an explanation which I craved for, in spite of my vexation.

During the afternoon I continued my policy of the morning. I was

morose and silent until we reached Sermonetta, where we were to pass the night. We arrived early, and, the weather being fine, the lady said that she could enjoy a walk, and asked me politely to offer her my arm. I did so, for it would have been rude to refuse; besides, I had had enough of my sulking fit. An explanation could alone bring matters back to their original standing, but I did not know how to force it upon the lady. Her husband followed us at some distance with the sister.

When we were far enough in advance, I ventured to ask her why she had supposed my toothache to have been feigned.

"I am very candid," she said. "It is because the difference in your manner was so marked and because you were so careful to avoid looking at me through the whole day. A toothache would not have prevented you from being polite, and therefore I thought it had been feigned for some purpose. But I am certain that not one of us can possibly have given you any grounds for such a rapid change in your manner."

"Yet something must have caused the change, and you, madame, are only half sincere."

"You are mistaken, sir, I am entirely sincere; and, if I have given you any motive for anger, I am, and must remain, ignorant of it. Be good enough to tell me what I have done."

"Nothing, for I have no right to complain."

"Yes, you have; you have a right, the same that I have myself, the right which good society grants to every one of its members. Speak and show yourself as sincere as I am."

"You are certainly bound not to know, or to pretend not to know, the real cause, but you must acknowledge that my duty is to remain silent."

"Very well; now it is all over; but, if your duty bids you to conceal the cause of your bad humour, it also bids you not to show it. Delicacy sometimes enforces upon a polite gentleman the necessity of concealing certain feelings which might implicate either himself or others; it is a restraint for the mind, I confess, but it has some advantage when its effect is to render more amiable the man who forces himself to accept that restraint."

Her close argument made me blush for shame, and, carrying her beautiful hand to my lips, I confessed myself in the wrong.

"You would see me at your feet," I exclaimed, "in token of my repentance, were I not afraid of injuring you—"

"Do not let us allude to the matter any more," she answered.

And, pleased with my repentance, she gave me a look so expressive of forgiveness that, without being afraid of augmenting my guilt, I took my lips off her hand and raised them to her half-open, smiling mouth.

Intoxicated with rapture, I passed so rapidly from a state of sadness to one of overwhelming cheerfulness that during our supper the advocate enjoyed a thousand jokes upon my toothache, so quickly cured by the simple remedy of a walk.

On the following day we dined at Velletri and slept in Marino, where, although the town was full of troops, we had two small rooms and a good supper.

I could not have been on better terms with my charming Roman; for, although I had received but a rapid proof of her regard, it had been such a true one—such a tender one! In the coach our eyes could not say much; but I was sitting opposite to her, and our feet spoke a very eloquent language.

The advocate had told me that he was going to Rome on some ecclesiastical business and that he intended to reside in the house of his mother-in-law, whom his wife had not seen since her marriage two years before, and her sister hoped to remain in Rome, where she expected to marry a clerk at the Spirito Santo Bank. He gave me their address, with a pressing invitation to call upon them, and I promised to devote all my spare time to them.

We were enjoying our dessert when my beautiful lady-love, admiring my snuff-box, told her husband that she wished she had one like it.

"I will buy you one, dear."

"Then buy mine," I said. "I will let you have it for twenty ounces, and you can give me a note-of-hand payable to bearer in payment. I owe that amount to an Englishman and will give it him to redeem my debt."

"Your snuff-box, my dear abbé, is worth twenty ounces, but I cannot buy it unless you agree to receive payment in cash; I should be delighted to see it in my wife's possession, and she would keep it as a remembrance of you."

His wife, thinking that I would not accept his offer, said that she had no objection to give me the note-of-hand.

"But," exclaimed the advocate, "can you not guess that the Englishman exists only in our friend's imagination? He would never enter an appearance, and we would have the snuff-box for nothing. Do not trust the abbé, my dear, he is a great cheat."

"I had no idea," answered his wife, looking at me, "that the world contained rogues of this species."

I affected a melancholy air and said that I only wished myself rich enough to be often guilty of such cheating.

When a man is in love, very little is enough to throw him into despair and as little to enhance his joy to the utmost. There was but one bed in the room where supper had been served and another in a small closet leading out of the room, but without a door. The ladies chose the closet, and the advocate retired to rest before me. I bade the ladies good night as soon as they had gone to bed; I looked at my dear mistress and, after undressing, went to bed, intending not to sleep through the night. But the reader may imagine my rage when I found, as I got into the bed, that it creaked loud enough to wake the dead. I waited, however, quite motionless, until my companion should be fast asleep, and, as soon as his snoring told me that he was entirely under the influence of Morpheus, I tried to slip out of the bed; but the infernal creaking

which took place whenever I moved woke my companion, who felt about with his hand and, finding me near him, went to sleep again. Half an hour after I tried a second time, but with the same result. I had to give it up in despair.

Love is the most cunning of gods; in the midst of obstacles he seems to be in his own element, but, as his very existence depends upon the enjoyment of those who ardently worship him, the shrewd, all-seeing, little blind god contrives to bring success out of the most desperate case.

I had given up all hope for the night and had nearly gone to sleep when suddenly we heard a dreadful noise. Guns are fired in the street, people, screaming and howling, are running up and down the stairs; at last there is a loud knocking at our door. The advocate, frightened out of his slumbers, asks me what it can all mean; I pretend to be very indifferent and beg to be allowed to sleep. But the ladies are trembling with fear and loudly calling for a light. I remain very quiet, the advocate jumps out of bed and runs out of the room to obtain a candle; I rise at once, I followed him to shut the door, but I slam it rather too hard, the double spring of the lock gives way, and the door cannot be reopened without the key.

I approach the ladies in order to calm their anxiety, telling them that the advocate would soon return with a light, and that we should then know the cause of the tumult, but I do not waste my time, and I meet with very little opposition. However, leaning rather too heavily, I break through the bottom of the bedstead, and we suddenly find ourselves all together in a heap on the floor. The advocate comes back and knocks at the door; the sister gets up; I obey the prayers of my charming friend and, feeling my way, reach the door and tell the advocate that I cannot open it and that he must get the key. The two sisters are behind me. I extend my hand, but am abruptly repulsed and judge that I have addressed myself to the wrong quarter; I go to the other side, and there I am better received. But the husband returns, the noise of the key in the lock announces that the door is going to be opened, and we return to our respective beds.

The advocate hurries to the bed of the two frightened ladies, thinking of relieving their anxiety, but, when he sees them buried in their broken-down bedstead, he bursts into a loud laugh. He tells me to come and have a look at them, but I am very modest and decline the invitation. He then tells me that the alarm has been caused by a German detachment attacking suddenly the Spanish troops in the city and that the Spaniards are running away. In a quarter of an hour the noise has ceased, and quiet is entirely re-established. The advocate complimented me upon my coolness, got into bed again and was soon asleep. As for me, I was careful not to close my eyes, and, as soon as I saw daylight, I got up in order to change my shirt.

I returned for breakfast, and, while we were drinking the delicious coffee which Donna Lucrezia had made, as I thought, better than ever, I remarked that her sister frowned on me. But how little I care for her anger when I saw the cheerful, happy countenance and the approv-

ing looks of my adored Lucrezia! I felt a delightful sensation run through the whole of my body.

We reached Rome very early. We had taken breakfast at the Tour, and, the advocate being in a very gay mood, I assumed the same tone, loading him with compliments, and, predicting that a son would be born to him. I compelled his wife to promise it should be so. I did not forget the sister of my charming Lucrezia, and, to make her change her hostile attitude toward me, I addressed to her so many pretty compliments and behaved in such a friendly manner that she was compelled to forgive the fall of the bed. As I took leave of them, I promised to give them a call on the following day.

I was in Rome with a good wardrobe, pretty well supplied with money and jewellery, not wanting in experience and with excellent letters of introduction. I was free, my own master and just reaching the age in which a man can have faith in his own fortune, provided he is not deficient in courage and is blessed with a face likely to attract the sympathy of those he mixes with. I was not handsome, but I had something better than beauty—a striking expression which almost compelled a kind interest in my favour, and I felt myself ready for anything. I knew that Rome is the one city in which a man can begin from the lowest rung and reach the very top of the social ladder. This knowledge increased my courage, and I must confess that a most inveterate feeling of self-esteem, which on account of my inexperience I could not distrust, enhanced wonderfully my confidence in myself.

The man who intends to make his fortune in this ancient capital of the world must be a chameleon susceptible of reflecting all the colours of the atmosphere that surrounds him, a Proteus apt to assume every form, every shape. He must be supple, flexible, insinuating, close, inscrutable, often base, sometimes sincere, sometimes perfidious, always concealing a part of his knowledge, indulging in but one tone of voice, patient, a perfect master of his own countenance, as cold as ice when any other man would be all fire; and, if unfortunately he is not religious at heart—a very common occurrence for a soul possessing the above requisites—he must have religion in his mind, that is to say, on his face, on his lips, in his manners; he must suffer quietly, if he be an honest man, the necessity of knowing himself an arrant hypocrite. The man whose soul would loathe such a life should leave Rome and seek his fortune elsewhere. I do not know whether I am praising or excusing myself, but of all those qualities I possessed but one—namely, flexibility; for the rest, I was only an interesting, heedless young fellow, a pretty good blooded horse, but not broken—or, rather, badly broken, and that is much worse.

I began by delivering the letter I had received from Don Lelio for Father Georgi. The learned monk enjoyed the esteem of everyone in Rome, and the Pope himself had a great consideration for him because he disliked the Jesuits and did not put a mask on to tear the mask from their faces, although they deemed themselves powerful enough to despise him.

He read the letter with great attention and expressed himself disposed to be my adviser, and said that consequently I might make him responsible for any evil that might befall me, as misfortune is not to be feared by a man who acts rightly. He asked me what I intended to do in Rome, and I answered that I wished him to tell me what to do.

"Perhaps I may; but in that case you must come and see me often and never conceal from me anything, you understand, not anything of what interests you or of what happens to you."

"Don Lelio has likewise given me a letter for the Cardinal Acquaviva."

"I congratulate you; the cardinal's influence is greater even than that of the Pope."

"Must I deliver the letter at once?"

"No; I will see him this evening and prepare him for your visit. Call on me to-morrow morning, and I will then tell you where and when you are to deliver your letter to the cardinal. Have you any money?"

"Enough for all my wants during one year."

"That is well. Have you any acquaintances?"

"Not one."

"Do not make any without first consulting me, and, above all, avoid coffee-houses and ordinaries, but, if you should happen to frequent such places, listen and never speak. Be careful to form your judgment upon those who ask any questions from you, and, if common civility obliges you to give an answer, give only an evasive one if any other is likely to commit you. Do you speak French?"

"Not one word."

"I am sorry for that; you must learn French. Have you been a student?"

"A poor one, but I have a sufficient smattering to converse with ordinary company."

"That is enough; but be very prudent, for Rome is the city in which smatterers unmask each other and are always at war amongst themselves. I hope you will take your letter to the cardinal dressed like a modest abbé and not in this elegant costume, which is not likely to conjure fortune. Adieu, let me see you to-morrow."

Highly pleased with the welcome I had received at his hands and with all he had said to me, I left his house and proceeded towards Campo di Fiore to deliver the letter of my cousin Antonio to Don Gaspar Vivaldi, who received me in his library, where I met two respectable-looking priests. He gave me the most friendly welcome, asked for my address and invited me to dinner for the next day. He praised Father Georgi most highly and, accompanying me as far as the stairs, told me that he would give me on the morrow the amount his friend Don Antonio requested him to hand me.

More money which my generous cousin was bestowing on me! It is easy enough to give away when one possesses sufficient means to do

it, but it is not every man who knows how to give. I found the proceeding of Don Antonio more delicate even than generous; I could not refuse his present; it was my duty to prove my gratitude by accepting it.

Just after I had left M. Vivaldi's house, I found myself face to face with Stephano, and this extraordinary original loaded me with friendly caresses. I inwardly despised him, yet I could not feel hatred for him; I looked upon him as the instrument which Providence had been pleased to employ in order to save me from ruin. After telling me that he had obtained from the Pope all he wished, he advised me to avoid meeting the fatal constable who had advanced me two sequins in Seraval because he had found out that I had deceived him and had sworn revenge against me. I asked Stephano to induce the man to leave my acknowledgment of the debt in the hands of a certain merchant whom we both knew and that I would call there to discharge the amount. This was done, and it ended the affair.

That evening I dined at the ordinary, which was frequented by Romans and foreigners; but I carefully followed the advice of Father Georgi. I heard a great deal of harsh language used against the Pope and against the Cardinal Minister, who had caused the Papal States to be inundated by eighty thousand men, Germans as well as Spaniards. But I was much surprised when I saw that everybody was eating meat, although it was Saturday. But a stranger during the first few days after his arrival in Rome is surrounded with many things which at first cause surprise and to which he soon gets accustomed. There is not a Catholic city in the world in which a man is half so free in religious matters as in Rome. The inhabitants of Rome are like the men employed at the Government tobacco works, who are allowed to take gratis as much tobacco as they want for their own use. One can live in Rome with the most complete freedom, except that the *ordini santissimi* are as much to be dreaded as the famous *lettres de cachet* before the Revolution came and destroyed them and showed the whole world the general character of the French nation.

The next day, the 1st of October, 1743, I made up my mind to be shaved. The down on my chin had become a beard, and I judged that it was time to renounce some of the privileges enjoyed by adolescence. I dressed myself completely in the Roman fashion, and Father Georgi was highly pleased when he saw me in that costume, which had been made by the tailor of my dear cousin, Don Antonio.

Father Georgi invited me to take a cup of chocolate with him and informed me that the cardinal had been apprised of my arrival by letter from Don Lelio and that His Eminence would receive me at noon at the Villa Negroni, where he would be taking a walk. I told Father Georgi that I had been invited to dinner by M. Vivaldi, and he advised me to cultivate his acquaintance.

I proceeded to the Villa Negroni; the moment he saw me, the cardinal stopped to receive my letter, allowing two persons who accompanied him to walk forward. He put the letter in his pocket without

reading it, regarded me for one or two minutes and inquired whether I felt any taste for politics. I answered that until now I had not felt in me any but frivolous tastes, but that I would make bold to answer for my readiness to execute all the orders which His Eminence might be pleased to lay upon me if he should judge me worthy of entering his service.

"Come to my office to-morrow morning," said the cardinal, "and ask for the Abbé Gama, to whom I will give my instructions. You must apply yourself diligently to the study of the French language; it is indispensable."

He then inquired after Don Leilo's health and, after kissing his hand, took my leave.

I hastened to the house of M. Gaspar Vivaldi, where I dined amongst a well chosen party of guests. M. Vivaldi was not married; literature was his only passion. He loved Latin poetry even better than Italian, and Horace, whom I knew by heart, was his favorite poet. After dinner we repaired to his study, and he handed me one hundred Roman crowns, Don Antonio's present, and assured me that I would be most welcome whenever I would call to take a cup of chocolate with him.

After I had taken leave of Don Gaspar, I proceeded towards the Minerva, for I longed to enjoy the surprise of my dear Lucrezia and of her sister; I inquired for Donna Cecilia Monti, their mother, and I saw, to my great astonishment, a young widow who looked like the sister of her two charming daughters. There was no need for me to give her my name; I had been announced, and she expected me. Her daughters soon came in, and their greeting caused me some amusement, for I did not appear to them to be the same individual. Donna Lucrezia presented me to her youngest sister, only eleven years of age, and to her brother, an abbé of fifteen, of charming appearance. I took care to behave so as to please the mother; I was modest, respectful, and showed a deep interest in everything I saw. The good advocate arrived and was surprised at the change in my appearance. He launched out in his usual jokes, and I followed him on that ground, yet I was careful not to give to my conversation the tone of levity which used to cause so much mirth in our travelling coach; so that, to pay me a compliment, he told me that, if I had had the sign of manhood shaved from my face, I had certainly transferred it to my mind. Donna Lucrezia did not know what to think of the change in my manners.

Towards evening I saw, coming in rapid succession, five or six ordinary-looking ladies and as many abbés, who appeared to me some of the volumes with which I was to begin my Roman education. They all listened attentively to the most insignificant word I uttered, and I was very careful to let them enjoy their conjectures about me. Donna Cecilia told the advocate that he was a poor painter and that his portraits were not like the originals; he answered that she could not judge because the original was showing under a mask, and I

pretended to be mortified by his answer. Donna Lucrezia said that she found me exactly the same, and her sister was of opinion that the air of Rome gave strangers a peculiar appearance. Everybody applauded, and Angélique turned red with satisfaction. After a visit of four hours I bowed myself out, and the advocate, following me, told me that his mother-in-law begged me to consider myself as a friend of the family and to be certain of a welcome at any hour I liked to call. I thanked him gratefully and took my leave, trusting that I had pleased this amiable society as much as it had pleased me.

The next day I presented myself to the Abbé Gama. He was a Portuguese, about forty years old, handsome and with a countenance full of candour, wit and good temper. His affability claimed and obtained confidence. His manners and accent were quite Roman. He informed me in the blindest manner that His Eminence had himself given his instructions about me to his major-domo, that I would have a lodging in the cardinal's palacè, that I would have my meals at the secretaries' table and that, until I learned French, I would have nothing to do but make extracts from letters that he would supply me with. He then gave me the address of the French teacher, to whom he had already spoken in my behalf. He was a Roman advocate, Dalacqua by name, residing precisely opposite the palace.

After this short explanation and an assurance that I could at all times rely upon his friendship, he had me taken to the major-domo, who made me sign my name at the bottom of a page in a large book already filled with other names and counted out sixty Roman crowns, which he paid me for three months' salary in advance. After this he accompanied me, followed by a *staffiere*, to my apartment on the third floor, which I found very comfortably furnished. The servant handed me the key, saying that he would come every morning to attend upon me, and the major-domo accompanied me to the gate to make me known to the gatekeeper. I immediately repaired to my inn, sent my luggage to the palace and found myself established in a place in which a great fortune awaited me if I had only been able to lead a wise and prudent life, but unfortunately it was not in my nature. *Volentem ducit, nolentem trahit.*

I naturally felt it my duty to call upon my mentor, Father Georgi, to whom I gave all my good news. He said I was on the right road and that my fortune was in my hands.

"Recollect," added the good father, "that to lead a blameless life you must curb your passions and that, whatever misfortune may befall you, it cannot be ascribed by anyone to a want of good luck or attributed to fate; those words are devoid of sense, and all the fault will rightly fall on your own head."

"I foresee, reverend father, that my youth and my want of experience will often make it necessary for me to disturb you. I am afraid of proving myself too heavy a charge for you, but you will find me docile and obedient."

"I suppose you will often think me rather too severe; but you are not likely to confide everything in me."

"Everything, without any exception."

"Allow me to feel somewhat doubtful; you have not told me where you spent your hours yesterday."

"Because I did not think it was worth mentioning. I made the acquaintance of those persons during my journey; I believe them to be worthy and respectable and the right sort of people for me to visit, unless you should be of a different opinion."

"God forbid! It is a very respectable house, frequented by honest people. They are delighted at having made your acquaintance; you are much liked by everybody, and they hope to retain you as a friend; I heard all about it this morning; but you must not go there too often and as a regular guest."

"Must I cease my visits at once and without cause?"

"No, it would be a want of politeness on your part. You may go there once or twice every week, but do not be a constant visitor. You are sighing, my son?"

"No, I assure you not. I will obey you."

"I hope it may not be only a matter of obedience, and I trust your heart will not feel it a hardship, but, if necessary, your heart must be conquered. Recollect that the heart is the greatest enemy of reason."

"Yet they can be made to agree."

"We often imagine so; but distrust the *animum* of your dear Horace. You know that there is no middle course with it; *nisi paret, imperat*."

"I know it, but in the family of which we were speaking there is no danger for my heart."

"I am glad of it because in that case it will be all the easier for you to abstain from frequent visits. Remember that I shall trust you."

"And I, reverend father, will listen to and follow your good advice. I will visit Donna Cecilia only now and then."

Feeling most unhappy, I took his hand to press it against my lips, but he folded me in his arms as a father might have done and turned round so as not to let me see that he was weeping.

I dined at the cardinal's palace and sat near the Abbé Gama; the table was laid for twelve persons, who all wore the costume of priests, for in Rome everyone is a priest or wishes to be thought a priest, and, as there is no law to forbid anyone to dress like an ecclesiastic, that dress is adopted by all those who wish to be respected, noblemen excepted, even if they are not in the ecclesiastical profession.

I felt very miserable and did not utter a word during the dinner; my silence was construed into a proof of my sagacity. As we rose from the table, the Abbé Gama invited me to spend the day with him, but I declined under pretence of letters to be written, and I truly did so for seven hours. I wrote to Don Lelio, to Don Antonio, to my young friend Paul and to the worthy Bishop of Martorano, who answered that he heartily wished himself in my place.

Deeply enamoured of Lucrezia and happy in my love, to give her

up appeared to me a shameful action. In order to insure the happiness of my future life, I was beginning by being the executioner of my present felicity and the tormentor of my heart. I revolted against such a necessity, which I judged fictitious and which I could not admit unless I stood guilty of vileness before the tribunal of my own reason. I thought that Father Georgi, if he wished to forbid my visiting that family, ought not to have said that it was worthy of respect; my sorrow would not have been so intense. The day and the whole of the night were spent in painful thoughts.

In the morning the Abbé Gama brought me a great book filled with ministerial letters, from which I was to compile for my amusement. After a short time devoted to that occupation, I went out to take my first French lesson, after which I walked towards the Strada Condotta. I intended to take a long walk, when I heard myself called by my name. I saw the Abbé Gama in front of a coffee-house. I whispered to him that Minerva had forbidden me the coffee-rooms of Rome. "Minerva," he answered, "desires you to form some idea of such places. Sit down by me."

I heard a young abbé telling aloud, but without bitterness, a story which attacked in a most direct manner the justice of His Holiness. Everybody was laughing and echoing the story. Another, being asked why he had left the service of Cardinal B., answered that it was because His Eminence did not think himself called upon to pay him except for certain private services, and everybody laughed outright. Another came to the Abbé Gama and told him that, if he felt any inclination to spend the afternoon at the Villa Medicis, he would find him there with two young Roman girls who were satisfied with a quartino, a gold coin worth one-fourth of a sequin. Another abbé read an incendiary sonnet against the government, and several took a copy of it. Another read a satire of his own composition, in which he tore to pieces the honour of a family. In the middle of all that confusion, I saw a priest with a very attractive countenance come in. The size of his hips made me take him for a woman dressed in men's clothes, and I said so to Gama, who told me that he was the celebrated *castrato*, Bepino della Mamana. The abbé called him to us and told him with a laugh that I had taken him for a girl. The impudent fellow looked me full in the face and said that, if I liked, he would show me whether I had been right or wrong.

At the dinner-table everyone spoke to me, and I fancied I had given proper answers to all, but, when the repast was over, the Abbé Gama invited me to take coffee in his own apartment. The moment we were alone, he told me that all the guests I had met were worthy and honest men, and he asked me whether I believed that I had succeeded in pleasing the company.

"I flatter myself I have," I answered.

"You are wrong," said the abbé, "you are flattering yourself. You so conspicuously avoided the questions put to you that everybody

in the room noticed your extreme reserve. In the future no one will ask you any questions."

"I should be sorry if it should turn out so, but was I to expose my own concerns?"

"No, but there is a medium in all things."

"Yes, the medium of Horace, but it is often a matter of great difficulty to hit it exactly."

"A man ought to know how to obtain affection and esteem at the same time."

"That is the very wish nearest to my heart."

"To-day you have tried for the esteem much more than for the affection of your fellow creatures. It may be a noble aspiration, but you must prepare yourself to fight jealousy and her daughter, calumny; if those two monsters do not succeed in destroying you, the victory must be yours. Now, for instance, you thoroughly refuted Salicetti to-day. Well, he is a physician and, what is more, a Corsican; he must feel badly towards you."

"Could I grant that the longings of women during their pregnancy have no influence whatever on the skin of the fœtus when I know the reverse to be the case? Are you not of my opinion?"

"I am for neither party; I have seen many children with some such marks, but I have no means of knowing with certainty whether those marks have their origin in some longing experienced by the mother while she was pregnant."

"But I can swear it is so."

"All the better for you if your conviction is based upon such evidence, and all the worse for Salicetti if he denies the possibility of the thing without certain authority. But let him remain in error; it is better than to prove him to be in the wrong and to make a bitter enemy of him."

In the evening I called upon Lucrezia. The family knew my success and warmly congratulated me. Lucrezia told me that I looked sad, and I answered that I was assisting at the funeral of my liberty, for I was no longer my own master. Her husband, always fond of a joke, told her that I was in love with her, and his mother-in-law advised him not to show so much intrepidity. I only remained an hour with those charming persons and then took leave of them, but the very air around me was heated by the flame within my breast. When I reached my room, I began to write and spent the night in composing an ode, which I sent the next day to the advocate. I was certain that he would show it to his wife, who loved poetry and who did not yet know that I was a poet. I abstained from seeing her again for three or four days. I was learning French and making extracts from ministerial letters.

His Eminence was in the habit of receiving every evening, and his rooms were thronged with the highest nobility of Rome; I had never attended these receptions. The Abbé Gama told me that I ought to do so, as he did, without any pretension. I followed his advice and went; nobody spoke to me, but, as I was unknown, everyone looked at me

and inquired who I was. The Abbé Gama asked me which was the lady who appeared to me the most lovely, and I showed one to him; but I regretted having done so, for the courtier went to her and of course informed her of what I had said. Soon afterwards I saw her look at me through an eyeglass and smile kindly upon me. She was the Marchioness G—, whose *cicisbeo* was Cardinal S— C—.

On the very day I had fixed to spend the evening with Donna Lucrezia, the worthy advocate called upon me. He told me, if I thought I was going to prove I was not in love with his wife by staying away, I was very much mistaken, and he invited me to accompany all the family to Testaccio, where they intended to have luncheon on the following Thursday. He added that his wife knew my ode by heart and that she had read it to the intended husband of Angélique, who had a great wish to make my acquaintance. That gentleman was likewise a poet and would be one of the party to Testaccio. I promised the advocate I would come to his house on the Thursday with a carriage for two.

At that time, every Thursday in the month of October was a festival day in Rome. I went to see Donna Cecilia in the evening, and we talked about the excursion the whole time. I felt certain that Donna Lucrezia looked forward to it with as much pleasure as I did myself. We had no fixed plan, we could not have any, but we trusted to the god of love and tacitly placed our confidence in his protection.

I took care that Father Georgi should not hear of that excursion before I mentioned it to him myself, and I hastened to him in order to obtain his permission to go. I confess that, to obtain his leave, I professed the most complete indifference about it, and the consequence was that the good man insisted upon my going, saying that it was a family party and that it was quite right for me to visit the environs of Rome and to enjoy myself in a respectable way.

I went to Donna Cecilia's in a carriage which I hired from a certain Roland, a native of Avignon; if I insist here upon his name, it is because my readers will meet him again in eighteen years, his acquaintance with me having had very important results. The charming widow introduced me to Don Francisco, her intended son-in-law, whom she represented as a great friend of literary men and very deeply learned himself. I accepted it as gospel and behaved accordingly; yet I thought he looked rather heavy and not sufficiently elated for a young man on the point of marrying such a pretty girl as Angélique. But he had plenty of good nature and plenty of money, and these are better than learning and gallantry.

As we were ready to get into the carriages, the advocate told me that he would ride with me in my carriage and that the three ladies would go with Don Francisco in the other. I answered at once that he ought to keep Don Francisco company and that I claimed the privilege of taking care of Donna Cecilia, adding that I should feel dishonoured if things were arranged differently. Thereupon I offered my arm to the handsome widow, who thought the arrangement ac-

according to the rules of etiquette and good breeding, and an approving look of my Lucrezia gave me the most agreeable sensation. Yet the proposal of the advocate struck me somewhat unpleasantly because it was in contradiction with his former behaviour and especially with what he had said to me in my room a few days before. "Has he become jealous?" I said to myself, but the hope of bringing him round during our stay at Testaccio cleared away the dark cloud on my mind, and I was very amiable to Donna Cecilia. What with lunching and walking, we contrived to pass the afternoon very pleasantly; I was very gay, and my love for Lucrezia was not once mentioned; I was all attention to her mother. I occasionally addressed myself to Lucrezia, but not once to the advocate, feeling this the best way to show him that he had insulted me.

As we prepared to return, the advocate carried off Donna Cecilia and went with her to the carriage in which were already seated Angélique and Don Francisco. Scarcely able to control my delight, I offered my arm to Donna Lucrezia, paying her some absurd compliment, while the advocate laughed outright and seemed to enjoy the trick he imagined he had played me.

How many things we might have said to each other before giving ourselves up to the material enjoyment of our love, had not the instants been so precious! But, aware that we had only half an hour before us, we were sparing of the minutes. We were absorbed in our happiness when suddenly Lucrezia exclaims, "O dear, how unfortunate we are!"

She pushes me back, composes herself, the carriage stops, and the servant opens the door.

"What is the matter?" I inquire.

"We are at home."

Whenever I recollect the circumstance, it seems to me fabulous, for it is not possible to annihilate time, and the horses were regular old screws. But we were lucky all through. The night was dark, and my beloved angel happened to be on the right side to get out of the carriage first, so that, although the advocate was at the door as soon as the footman, everything went right, owing to the slow manner in which Lucrezia alighted. I remained at Donna Cecilia's until midnight.

When I got home again, I went to bed; but how could I sleep? I felt burning in me the flame which I had not been able to restore to its original source in the too short distance from Testaccio to Rome. It was consuming me. Oh, unhappy are those who believe that the pleasures of Cythera are worth having unless they are enjoyed in the most perfect accord by two hearts overflowing with love!

I rose only in time for my French lesson. My teacher had a pretty daughter named Barbara, who was always present during my lessons and who sometimes taught me herself with even more exactitude than her father. A good-looking young man, who likewise took lessons, was courting her, and I soon perceived that she loved him. This young man called often upon me, and I liked him, especially on account of

his reserve, for, although I made him confess his love for Barbara, he always changed the subject if I mentioned it in our conversation.

I had made up my mind to respect his reserve and had not alluded to his affection for several days. But all at once I remarked that he had ceased his visits both to me and to his teacher, and at the same time I observed that the young girl was no longer present at my lessons; I felt some curiosity to know what had happened, although it was not, after all, any concern of mine.

A few days after, as I was returning from church, I met the young man and reproached him for keeping away from us all. He told me that great sorrow had befallen him, which had fairly turned his brain, and that he was a prey to the most intense despair. His eyes were wet with tears. As I was leaving him, he held me back, and I told him that I would no longer be his friend unless he opened his heart to me. He took me to one of the cloisters and spoke thus:

"I have loved Barbara for the last six months, and for three months she has given me indisputable proof of her affection. Five days ago we were betrayed by the servant, and the father caught us in a rather delicate position. He left the room without saying one word, and I followed him, thinking of throwing myself at his feet; but, as I appeared before him, he took hold of me by the arm, pushed me roughly to the door and forbade me ever to present myself again at his house. I cannot claim her hand in marriage because one of my brothers is married and my father is not rich; I have no profession, and my mistress has nothing. Alas! now that I have confessed all to you, tell me, I entreat you, how she is. I am certain that she is as miserable as I am myself. I cannot manage to get a letter delivered to her for she does not leave the house, even to attend church. Unhappy wretch! What shall I do?"

I could but pity him, for, as a man of honour, it was impossible for me to interfere in such a business. I told him that I had not seen Barbara for five days, and, not knowing what to say, I gave him the advice which is tendered by all fools under similar circumstances: I advised him to forget his mistress.

We had then reached the quay of Ripetta, and, observing that he was casting dark looks towards the Tiber, I feared his despair might lead him to commit some foolish attempt against his own life, and, in order to calm his excited feelings, I promised to make some inquiries from the father about his mistress and to inform him of all I heard. He felt quieted by my promise and entreated me not to forget him.

In spite of the fire which had been raging through my veins ever since the excursion to Testaccio, I had not seen my Lucrezia for four days. I dreaded Father Georgi's suave manner, and I was still more afraid of finding he had made up his mind to give me no more advice. But, unable to resist my desires, I called upon Lucrezia after my French lesson and found her alone, sad and dispirited.

"Ah!" she exclaimed, as soon as I was by her side, "I think you might find time to come and see me!"

"My beloved one, it is not that I cannot find time, but I am so jealous of my love that I would rather die than let it be known publicly. I have been thinking of inviting you all to dine with me at Frascati. I will send you a phaeton, and I trust that some lucky accident will smile upon our love."

"Oh, yes! do, dearest! I am sure your invitation will be accepted."

In a quarter of an hour the rest of the family came in, and I proffered my invitation for the following Sunday, which happened to be the festival of St. Ursula, patroness of Lucrezia's youngest sister. I begged Donna Cecilia to bring her as well as her son. My proposal being readily accepted, I gave notice that the phaeton would be at Donna Cecilia's door at seven o'clock and that I would come myself with a carriage for two persons.

The next day I went to M. Dalacqua, and after my lesson I saw Barbara, who, passing from one room to another, dropped a paper and earnestly looked at me. I felt bound to pick it up because a servant, who was at hand, might have seen it and taken it. It was a letter, enclosing another addressed to her lover. The note for me ran thus: "If you think it to be a sin to deliver the enclosed to your friend, burn it. Have pity on an unfortunate girl and be discreet."

The enclosed letter, which was unsealed, ran as follows: "If you love me as deeply as I love you, you cannot hope to be happy without me; we cannot correspond in any other way than the one I am bold enough to adopt. I am ready to do anything to unite our lives until death. Consider and decide."

The cruel situation of the poor girl moved me almost to tears; yet I determined to return her letter the next day, and I enclosed it in a note in which I begged her to excuse me if I could not render her the service she required at my hands. I put it in my pocket ready for delivery. The next day I went for my lesson as usual, but, not seeing Barbara, I had no opportunity of returning her letter and postponed its delivery to the following day. Unfortunately, just after I had returned to my room, the unhappy lover made his appearance. His eyes were red from weeping, his voice hoarse; he drew such a vivid picture of his misery that, dreading some mad action counselled by despair, I could not withhold from him the consolation which I knew it was in my power to give. This was my first error in this fatal business; I was the victim of my own kindness.

The poor fellow read the letter over and over; he kissed it with transports of joy; he wept, hugged me and thanked me for saving his life and finally entreated me to take charge of his answer, as his beloved mistress must be longing for consolation as much as he had been himself, assuring me that his letter could not in any way implicate me and that I was at liberty to read it.

And truly, although very long, his letter contained nothing but the assurance of everlasting love and hopes which could not be realised. Yet I was wrong to accept the character of Mercury to the two young

lovers. To refuse I had only to recollect that Father Georgi would certainly have disapproved of my easy compliance.

The next day I found M. Dalacqua ill in bed; his daughter gave me my lesson in his room, and I thought that perhaps she had obtained her pardon. I contrived to give her her lover's letter, which she dexterously conveyed to her pocket, but her blushes would easily have betrayed her if her father had been looking that way. After the lesson I gave M. Dalacqua notice that I would not come on the morrow, as it was the festival of St. Ursula, one of the eleven thousand princesses and martyr-virgins.

In the evening, at the reception of His Eminence, which I attended regularly, although persons of distinction seldom spoke to me, the cardinal beckoned to me. He was speaking to the beautiful Marchioness G—, to whom Gama had indiscreetly confided that I thought her the handsomest woman amongst His Eminence's guests.

"Her grace," said the cardinal, "wishes to know whether you are making rapid progress in the French language, which she speaks admirably."

I answered in Italian that I had learned a great deal, but that I was not yet bold enough to speak.

"You should be bold," said the marchioness, "but without showing any pretension. It is the best way to disarm criticism."

My mind having almost unwittingly lent to the words "You should be bold" a meaning which had very likely been far from the idea of the marchioness, I turned very red, and the handsome speaker, observing it, changed the conversation and dismissed me.

The next morning, at seven o'clock, I was at Donna Cecilia's door. The phaeton was there as well as the carriage for two persons, which this time was an elegant *vis-à-vis*, so light and well hung that Donna Cecilia praised it highly when she took her seat.

"I shall have my turn on the way back," said Lucrezia; and I bowed to her as if in acceptance of her promise.

Lucrezia thus set suspicion at defiance in order to prevent suspicion arising. My happiness was assured, and I gave way to my natural flow of spirits. I ordered a splendid dinner, and we all set out towards the Villa Ludovisi. As we might have missed each other during our ramblings, we agreed to meet again at the inn at one o'clock. The discreet widow took the arm of her son-in-law, Angélique remained with her sister, and Lucrezia was my delightful share; Ursula and her brother were running about together, and in less than a quarter of an hour I had Lucrezia entirely to myself.

"Did you remark," she said, "with what candour I secured for us two hours of delightful *tête-à-tête*, and a *tête-à-tête* in a *vis-à-vis*, too! How clever Love is!"

"Yes, darling, Love has made our two souls one. I adore you, and, if I have the courage to pass so many days without seeing you, it is in order to be rewarded by the freedom of one single day like this."

"I did not think it possible. But you have managed it all very well. You know too much for your age, dearest."

"A month ago, my beloved, I was but an ignorant child, and you are the first woman who has initiated me into the mysteries of love. Your departure will kill me for I could not find another woman like you in all Italy."

"What! am I your first love? Alas! you will never be cured of it. Oh! why am I not entirely your own? You are also the first true love of my heart, and you will be the last. How great will be the happiness of my successor! I should not be jealous of her, but what suffering would be mine if I thought that her heart was not like mine!"

Lucrezia, seeing my eyes wet with tears, began to give way to her own, and, seating ourselves on the grass, our lips drank our tears amidst the sweetest kisses. How sweet is the nectar of the tears shed by Love, when that nectar is relished amidst the raptures of mutual ardour! I have often tasted them, those delicious tears, and I can say knowingly that the ancient physicians were right and that the modern are wrong!

In a moment of calm, seeing the disorder in which we both were, I told her that we might be surprised.

"Do not fear, my best beloved," she said, "we are under the guardianship of our good angels."

We were resting and reviving our strength by gazing into one another's eyes, when suddenly Lucrezia, casting a glance to the right, exclaimed:

"Look there! idol of my heart, have I not told you so? Yes, the angels are watching over us! Ah! how he stares at us! He seems to try to give us confidence. Look at that little demon; admire him! He must certainly be your guardian spirit or mine."

I thought she was delirious.

"What are you saying, dearest? I do not understand you. What am I to admire?"

"Do you not see that beautiful serpent with the blazing skin, which lifts its head and seems to worship us?"

I looked in the direction she indicated, and saw a serpent with changeable colours about three feet in length, which did seem to be looking at us. I was not particularly pleased at the sight, but I could not show myself less courageous than she was.

"What!" said I, "are you not afraid?"

"I tell you, again, that the sight is delightful to me, and I feel certain that it is a spirit with nothing but the shape, or rather the appearance, of a serpent."

"And if the spirit came gliding along the grass and hissed at you?"

"I would hold you tighter against my bosom and set him at defiance. In your arms Lucrezia is safe. Look! the spirit is going away. Quick, quick! He is warning us of the approach of some profane person and tells us to seek some other retreat to renew our pleasures. Let us go."

We rose and slowly advanced towards Donna Cecilia and the advocate, who were just emerging from a neighbouring alley. Without avoiding them and without hurrying, just as if to meet one another was a very natural occurrence, I inquired of Donna Cecilia whether her daughter had any fear of serpents.

"In spite of all her strength of mind," she answered, "she is dreadfully afraid of thunder, and she will scream with terror at the sight of the smallest snake. There are some here, but she need not be frightened for they are not venomous."

I was speechless with astonishment for I discovered that I had just witnessed a wonderful love miracle. At that moment the children came up, and, without ceremony, we again parted company.

"Tell me, wonderful being, bewitching woman, what would you have done if, instead of your pretty serpent, you had seen your husband and your mother?"

"Nothing. Do you not know that, in moments of such rapture, lovers see and feel nothing but love? Do you doubt having possessed me wholly, entirely?"

Lucrezia, in speaking thus, was not composing a poetical ode; she was not feigning fictitious sentiments; her looks, the sound of her voice, were truth itself.

"Are you certain," I inquired, "that we are not suspected?"

"My husband does not believe us to be in love with each other, or else he does not mind such trifling pleasures as youth is generally wont to indulge in. My mother is a clever woman, and perhaps she suspects the truth, but she is aware that it is no longer any concern of hers. As to my sister, she must know everything for she cannot have forgotten the broken-down bed; but she is prudent, and, besides, she has taken it into her head to pity me. She has no conception of the nature of my feelings towards you. If I had not met you, my beloved, I should probably have gone through life without realising such feeling myself, for what I feel for my husband—well, I have for him the obedience which my position as a wife imposes upon me."

"And yet he is most happy, and I envy him! He can clasp in his arms all your lovely person whenever he likes! There is no hateful veil to hide any of your charms from his gaze."

"Oh! where art thou, my dear serpent? Come to us, come and protect us against the surprise of the uninitiated, and this very instant I fulfil all the wishes of him I adore!"

We passed the morning in repeating that we loved each other, and in exchanging over and over again substantial proofs of our mutual passion.

We had a delicious dinner, during which I was all attention for the amiable Donna Cecilia. My pretty tortoise-shell box, filled with excellent snuff, went more than once round the table. As it happened to be in the hands of Lucrezia, who was sitting on my left, her husband told her that, if I had no objection, she might give me her ring and

keep the snuff-box in exchange. Thinking that the ring was not of as much value as my box, I immediately accepted, but I found the ring of greater value. Lucrezia would not, however, listen to anything on the subject. She put the box in her pocket and thus compelled me to keep her ring.

Dessert was nearly over, the conversation was very animated, when suddenly the intended husband of Angélique claimed our attention for the reading of a sonnet which he had composed and dedicated to me. I thanked him, and placing the sonnet in my pocket promised to write one for him. This was not, however, what he wished; he expected that, stimulated by emulation, I would call for paper and pen and sacrifice to Apollo hours which it was much more to my taste to employ in worshipping another god, whom his cold nature knew only by name. We drank coffee, I paid the bill, and we went about rambling through the labyrinthine alleys of the Villa Aldobrandini.

What sweet recollections that villa has left in my memory! It seemed as if I saw my divine Lucrezia for the first time. Our looks were full of ardent love, our hearts were beating in concert with the most tender impatience, and a natural instinct was leading us towards a solitary asylum which the hand of Love seemed to have prepared on purpose for the mysteries of its secret worship. There, in the middle of a long avenue, and under a canopy of thick foliage, we found a wide sofa of grass sheltered by a deep thicket; from that place our eyes could range over an immense plain and view the avenue to such a distance right and left that we were perfectly secure against any surprise. We did not need to exchange one word at the sight of this beautiful temple so favourable to our love; our hearts spoke one and the same language.

Without a word being uttered, two whole hours were devoted to the most delightful, loving ecstasy. At last we exclaimed together in mutual delight, "O Love, we thank thee!"

We slowly retraced our steps towards the carriages, revelling in our intense happiness. Lucrezia informed me that Angélique's suitor was wealthy, that he owned a splendid villa at Tivoli and that most likely he would invite us all to dine and pass the night there. "I pray the god of love," she added, "to grant us a night as beautiful as this day has been." Then, looking sad, she said, "But, alas! the ecclesiastical lawsuit which has brought my husband to Rome is progressing so favourably that I am mortally afraid he will obtain judgment all too soon."

The journey back to the city lasted two hours; we were alone in my *vis-à-vis* and we gave free rein to our feelings, but, as we were getting near Rome, we were compelled to let the curtain fall before the *dénouement* of the drama.

I returned home rather fatigued, but the sound sleep which was so natural at my age restored my full vigour, and in the morning I took my French lesson at the usual hour.

CHAPTER 10

M. DALACQUA being very ill, his daughter Barbara gave me my lesson. When it was over, she seized an opportunity of slipping a letter into my pocket and immediately disappeared, so that I had no chance of refusing. The letter was addressed to me and expressed feelings of the warmest gratitude. She only desired me to inform her lover that her father had spoken to her again and that most likely he would engage a new servant as soon as he had recovered from his illness, and she concluded her letter by assuring me that she never would implicate me in this business.

Her father was compelled to keep his bed for a fortnight, and Barbara continued to give me my lesson every day. I felt for her an interest which, from me towards a young and pretty girl, was indeed quite a new sentiment. It was a feeling of pity, and I was proud of being able to help and comfort her. Her eyes never rested upon mine, her hand never met mine, I never saw in her toilet the slightest wish to please me. She was very pretty, and I knew she had a tender, loving nature; but nothing interfered with the respect and the regard which I was bound in honour and in good faith to maintain towards her, and I was proud to remark that she never thought me capable of taking advantage of her weakness or of her position.

When the father had recovered, he dismissed his servant and engaged another. Barbara entreated me to inform her friend of the circumstance and likewise of her hope to gain the new servant to their interests, at least sufficiently to secure the possibility of carrying on some correspondence. I promised to do so, and as a mark of her gratitude she took my hand to carry it to her lips, but, quickly withdrawing it, I tried to kiss her; she turned her face away, blushing deeply. I was much pleased with her modesty.

Barbara having succeeded in gaining the new servant over, I had nothing more to do with the intrigue and was very glad of it, for I knew my interference might have brought evil on my own head. Unfortunately, it was already too late.

I seldom visited Don Gaspar; the study of the French language took up all my mornings, and it was only in the morning that I could see him; but I called every evening upon Father Georgi, and, although I went to him only as one of his *protégés*, it gave me some reputation. I seldom spoke before his guests, yet I never felt weary, for in his circle his friends would criticise without slandering, discuss politics without stubbornness and literature without passion, and I profited by all. After my visit to the sagacious monk I used to attend the assembly of the cardinal, my master, as a matter of duty. Almost every evening, when she happened to see me at her card-table, the beautiful marchioness would address to me a few gracious words in French, and I always answered in Italian, not caring to make her laugh before so many persons. My feelings for her were of a singular kind. I must leave them to

the analysis of the reader. I thought that woman charming, yet I avoided her; it was not because I was afraid of falling in love with her; I loved Lucrezia and firmly believed that such an affection was a shield against any other attachment; but I avoided the marchioness because I feared that she might love me or have a passing fancy for me. Was it self-conceit or modesty, vice or virtue? Perhaps neither one nor the other.

One evening she desired the Abbé Gama to call me to her; she was standing near the cardinal, my patron, and, the moment I approached her, she caused me a strange feeling of surprise by asking me in Italian a question which I was far from anticipating:

"How did you like Frascati?"

"Very much, madame; I have never seen such a beautiful place."

"But your company was still more beautiful, and your *vis-à-vis* was very smart."

I only bowed low to the marchioness, and a moment after Cardinal Acquaviva said to me, kindly, "You are astonished at your adventure being known?"

"No, my lord; but I am surprised that people should talk of it. I could not have believed Rome to be so much like a small village."

"The longer you live in Rome," said His Eminence, "the more you will find it so. You have not yet presented yourself to kiss the foot of our Holy Father?"

"Not yet, my lord."

"Then you must do so."

I bowed in compliance to his wishes.

The Abbé Gama told me to present myself to the Pope on the morrow, and he added, "Of course you have already shown yourself in the Marchioness G—'s palace?"

"No, I have never been there."

"You astonish me; but she often speaks to you!"

"I have no objection to go with you."

"I never visit at her palace."

"Yet she speaks to you likewise."

"Yes, but you do not know Rome; go alone; believe me, you ought to go."

"Will she receive me?"

"You are joking, I suppose. Of course it is out of the question for you to be announced. You will call when the doors are wide open to everybody. You will meet there all those who pay homage to her."

"Will she see me?"

"No doubt of it."

On the following day I proceeded to Monte Cavallo and was at once led into the room where the Pope was alone. I threw myself on my knees and kissed the holy cross on his most holy slipper. The Pope inquiring who I was, I told him, and he answered that he knew me, congratulating me upon my being in the service of so eminent a cardinal. He asked me how I had succeeded in gaining the cardinal's favour; I

answered with a faithful recital of my adventures from my arrival at Martorano. He laughed heartily at all I said respecting the poor and worthy bishop and remarked that, instead of trying to address him in Tuscan, I could speak in the Venetian dialect, as he was himself speaking to me in the dialect of Bologna. I felt quite at my ease with him and told him so much news and amused him so well that the Holy Father kindly said that he would be glad to see me whenever I presented myself at Monte Cavallo. I begged his permission to read all forbidden books, and he granted it with his blessing, saying that I should have the permission in writing, but he forgot it.

Benedict XIV was a learned man, very amiable and fond of a joke. I saw him for the second time at the Villa Medici. He called me to him and continued his walk, speaking of trifling things. He was then accompanied by Cardinal Albani and the ambassador from Venice. A man of modest appearance approached His Holiness, who asked what he required; the man said a few words in a low voice, and, after listening to him, the Pope answered, "You are right; place your trust in God," and he gave him his blessing. The poor fellow went away very dejected, and the Holy Father continued his walk.

"This man," I said, "most Holy Father, was not pleased with the answer of Your Holiness."

"Why?"

"Because most likely he had already addressed himself to God before he ventured to apply to you; and, when Your Holiness sends him back to God again, he finds himself sent back, as the proverb says, from Herod to Pilate."

The Pope, as well as his two companions, laughed heartily, but I kept a serious countenance.

"I cannot do any good," continued the Pope, "without God's assistance."

"Very true, Holy Father; but the man is aware that you are God's prime minister, and it is easy to imagine his trouble now that the minister sends him again to the Master. His only resource is to give money to the beggars of Rome, who for one *bajocco* will pray for him. They boast of their influence before the throne of the Almighty, but, as I have faith only in your credit, I entreat Your Holiness to deliver me of the heat which inflames my eyes by granting me permission to eat meat."

"Eat meat, my son."

"Holy Father, give me your blessing."

He blessed me, adding that I was not dispensed from fasting.

That very evening, at the cardinal's assembly, I found that the news of my dialogue with the Pope was already known. Everybody was anxious to speak to me. I felt flattered, but I was much more delighted at the joy which Cardinal Acquaviva tried in vain to conceal.

As I wished not to neglect Gama's advice, I presented myself at the mansion of the beautiful marchioness at the hour at which everyone had free access to her ladyship. I saw her, the cardinal and a great many

abbés; but I might have supposed myself invisible, for no one honoured me with a look, and no one spoke to me. I left after having performed for half an hour the character of a mute. Five or six days afterwards the marchioness told me graciously that she had caught a sight of me in her reception-rooms

"I was there, it is true, madame; but I had no idea that I had had the honour to be seen by your ladyship."

"Oh! I see everybody. They tell me that you have wit."

✓"If it is not a mistake on the part of your informants, your ladyship gives me very good news."

"Oh! they are excellent judges."

"Then, madame, those persons must have honoured me with their conversation; otherwise it is not likely that they would have been able to express such an opinion."

"No doubt; but let me see you often at my receptions."

Our conversation had been overheard by those who were around; His Excellency the cardinal told me that, when the marchioness addressed herself particularly to me in French, my duty was to answer her in the same language, good or bad. The cunning politician Gama took me aside and remarked that my repartees were too smart, too cutting, and that after a time I would be sure to displease. I had made considerable progress in French; I had given up my lessons, and practice was all I required. I was then in the habit of calling sometimes upon Lucrezia in the morning and of visiting in the evening Father Georgi, who was acquainted with the excursion to Frascati and had not expressed any dissatisfaction.

Two days after the sort of command laid upon me by the marchioness, I presented myself at her reception. As soon as she saw me, she favoured me with a smile, which I acknowledged by a deep reverence—that was all. A quarter of an hour afterwards I left the mansion. The marchioness was beautiful, but she was powerful, and I could not make up my mind to crawl at the feet of power, and on that head I felt disgusted with the manners of the Romans.

One morning towards the end of November the advocate, accompanied by Angélique's intended, called on me. The latter gave me a pressing invitation to spend twenty-four hours at Tivoli with the friends I had entertained at Frascati. I accepted with great pleasure, for I had found no opportunity of being alone with Lucrezia since the festival of St. Ursula. I promised to be at Donna Cecilia's house at daybreak with the same *vis-à-vis*. It was necessary to start very early because Tivoli is sixteen miles from Rome and has so many objects of interest that it requires many hours to see them all. As I had to sleep out that night, I craved permission to do so from the cardinal himself, who, hearing with whom I was going, told me that I was quite right not to lose such an opportunity of visiting that splendid place in such good society.

The first dawn of day found me with my *vis-à-vis* and four at the door of Donna Cecilia, who came with me as before. The charming

widow, notwithstanding her strict morality, was delighted at my love for her daughter. The family rode in a large phaeton hired by Don Francisco, which gave room for six persons.

At half-past seven in the morning we made a halt at a small place where had been prepared, by Don Francisco's orders, an excellent breakfast, which was intended to replace the dinner, and we all made a hearty meal, as we were not likely to find time for anything but supper at Tivoli. I wore on my finger the beautiful ring which Lucrezia had given me. At the back of the ring I had had a piece of enamel placed; on it was delineated a caduceus, with one serpent between the letters *alpha* and *omega*. This ring was the subject of conversation during the breakfast, and Don Francisco, as well as the advocate, exerted himself in vain to guess the meaning of the hieroglyphics, much to the amusement of Lucrezia, who understood the mysterious secret so well. We continued on our road and reached Tivoli at ten o'clock.

We began by visiting Don Francisco's villa. It was a beautiful little house, and we spent the following six hours in examining together the antiquities of Tivoli. Lucrezia having occasion to whisper a few words to Don Francisco, I seized the opportunity of telling Angélique that after her marriage I should be happy to spend a few days of the fine season with her.

"Sir," she answered, "I give you fair notice that the moment I become mistress in this house you will be the very first person to be excluded."

"I feel greatly obliged to you, signora, for your timely notice."

But the most amusing part of the affair was that I construed Angélique's wanton insult into a declaration of love. I was astounded. Lucrezia, remarking the state I was in, touched my arm, inquiring what ailed me. I told her, and she said at once:

"My darling, my happiness cannot last long; the cruel moment of our separation is drawing near. When I have gone, pray undertake the task of compelling her to acknowledge her error. Angélique pities me; be sure to avenge me."

I have forgotten to mention that at Don Francisco's villa I happened to praise a very pretty room opening upon the orange-house, and the amiable host, having heard me, came obligingly to me and said that it should be my room that night. Lucrezia feigned not to hear, but it was to her Ariadne's clue, for, as we were to remain all together during our visit to the beauties of Tivoli, we had no chance of a *tête-à-tête* through the day.

I have said that we devoted six hours to an examination of the antiquities of Tivoli, but I am bound to confess here that I saw, for my part, very little of them, and it was only twenty-eight years later that I made a thorough acquaintance with that beautiful spot.

We returned to the villa towards evening, fatigued and very hungry, but an hour's rest before supper—a repast which lasted two hours, the most delicious dishes, the most exquisite wines and particularly the excellent wine of Tivoli—restored us so well that everybody wanted

nothing more than a good bed and the freedom to enjoy the bed according to his own taste.

As everybody objected to sleeping alone, Lucrezia said that she would sleep with Angélique in one of the rooms leading to the orange-house, and proposed that her husband should share a room with the young abbé, his brother-in-law, and that Donna Cecilia should take her youngest daughter with her.

The arrangement met with general approbation, and Don Francisco, taking a candle, escorted me to my pretty little room adjoining the one in which the two sisters were to sleep, and, after showing me how I could lock myself in, he wished me good night and left me alone.

Angélique had no idea that I was her near neighbour, but Lucrezia and I, without exchanging a single word on the subject, had perfectly understood each other.

I watched through the keyhole and saw the two sisters come into their room, preceded by the polite Don Francisco, who carried a taper and, after lighting a night-lamp, bade them good night and retired. Then my two beauties, their door once locked, sat down on the sofa and completed their night toilet, which in that fortunate climate is similar to the costume of our first mother. Lucrezia, knowing that I was waiting to come in, told her sister to lie down on the side towards the window, and the virgin crossed the room in a state of complete undress. Lucrezia put out the lamp and lay down near her innocent sister.

Happy moments which I can no longer enjoy, but the sweet remembrance of which death alone can make me lose! I believe I never undressed as quickly as I did that evening.

I open the door and fell into the arms of my Lucrezia, who says to her sister, "It is my angel, my love; never mind him, and go to sleep."

What a delightful picture I could offer to my readers if it were possible for me to paint love in its most entrancing colours! What ecstasies! What delicious raptures!

The first rays of the sun, piercing through the crevices of the shutters, wake us out of our refreshing slumbers, and like two valorous knights who have ceased fighting only to renew the contest with increased ardour.

"Oh, my beloved Lucrezia, how supremely happy I am! But, my darling, mind your sister."

"Fear nothing, my life; my sister is kind, she loves me, she pities me; do you not love me, my dear Angélique? Oh! turn around, see how happy your sister is, and know what felicity awaits you when you own the sway of love."

Angélique, a young maiden of seventeen summers, who must have suffered the torments of Tantalus during the night and who only wishes for a pretext to show that she has forgiven her sister, turns round and, covering Lucrezia with kisses, confesses that she has not closed her eyes through the night.

"Then, darling Angélique, forgive likewise him who loves me and whom I adore," says Lucrezia.

Unfathomable power of the god who conquers all human beings!

"Angélique hates me," I say, "I dare not..."

"No, I do not hate you!" answers the charming girl.

"Kiss her, dearest," says Lucrezia, pushing me towards her sister and pleased to see her in my arms, motionless and languid.

It is thus, very likely, that, when the gods inhabited this earth, the voluptuous Arcadia, in love with the soft and pleasing breath of Zephyrus, one day opened her arms to love.

Lucrezia covered us both with kisses, and Angélique was as happy as her sister.

Phœbus had left the nuptial couch, and his rays were already diffusing light over the universe; that light, reaching us through the closed shutters, gave us warning to quit the place; we exchanged the most loving adieus, I left my two divinities and retired to my own room. A few minutes afterwards the cheerful voice of the advocate was heard in the chamber of the sisters; he was reproaching them for sleeping too long! Then he knocked at my door, threatening to bring the ladies to me, and went away, saying that he would send me the hairdresser.

After a careful toilet, I thought I could show my face, and I presented myself coolly in the drawing-room. The two sisters were there with the other members of our society, and I was delighted with their rosy cheeks. Lucrezia was frank and gay and beamed with happiness; Angélique, as fresh as the morning dew, was more radiant than usual, but fidgety, and carefully avoided looking me in the face. I saw that my useless attempts to catch her eye made her smile, and I remarked to her mother, rather mischievously, that it was a pity Angélique used paint for her face. She was duped by this stratagem and compelled me to pass a handkerchief over her face and was then obliged to look at me. I offered her my apologies, and Don Francisco appeared highly pleased that the complexion of his intended had met with such triumph.

After breakfast we took a walk through the garden, and, finding myself alone with Lucrezia, I expostulated tenderly with her for having almost thrown her sister into my arms.

"Do not reproach me," she said, "when I deserve praise. I have brought light into the darkness of my charming sister's soul; I have initiated her into the sweetest of mysteries, and now, instead of pitying me, she must envy me. Far from having hatred for you, she must love you dearly, and as I am so unhappy as to have to part from you very soon, my beloved, I leave her to you; she will replace me."

"Ah, Lucrezia, how can I love her?"

"Is she not a charming girl?"

"No doubt of it; but my admiration for you is a shield against any other love. Besides Don Francisco must, of course, entirely monopolise her, and I do not wish to cause coolness between them or ruin the peace of their home. I am certain your sister is not like you, and I would bet that, even now, she upbraids herself for having given way to the ardour of her temperament."

"Most likely; but, dearest, I am sorry to say my husband expects

to obtain judgment in the course of this week, and then these short instants of happiness will forever be lost to me."

This was sad news indeed, and, to cause a diversion at the breakfast-table, I took much notice of the generous Don Francisco and promised to compose a nuptial song for his wedding day, which had been fixed for the early part of January.

We returned to Rome, and for the three hours that she was with me in my *vis-à-vis*, Lucrezia had no reason to think that my affection was at all abated. But, when we reached the city, I was rather fatigued, and proceeded at once to the palace.

Lucrezia had guessed rightly; her husband obtained his judgment three or four days afterwards and called upon me to announce their departure for the day after the morrow; he expressed his warm friendship for me, and by his invitation I spent the two last evenings with Lucrezia, but we were always surrounded by the family. The day of her departure, wishing to cause her an agreeable surprise, I left Rome before them and waited for them at the place where I thought they would put up for the night, but the advocate, having been detained by several engagements, was held in Rome, and they did not reach the place until the next day for dinner. We dined together, we exchanged a sad, painful farewell, and they continued their journey, while I returned to Rome.

After the departure of this charming woman, I found myself in a sort of solitude very natural to a young man whose heart is not full of hope.

I passed whole days in my room, making extracts from the French letters written by the cardinal, and His Eminence was kind enough to tell me that my extracts were judiciously made, but that he insisted upon my not working so hard. The beautiful marchioness was present when he paid me that compliment.

Since my second visit to her, I had not presented myself at her house; she was consequently rather cool to me, and, glad of an opportunity of making me feel her displeasure, remarked to His Eminence that very likely work was a consolation to me in the great void caused by the departure of Donna Lucrezia.

"I candidly confess, madame, that I have felt her loss deeply. She was kind and generous; above all, she was indulgent when I did not call often upon her. My friendship for her was innocent."

"I have no doubt of it, although your ode was the work of a poet deeply in love."

"Oh!" said the kindly cardinal, "a poet cannot possibly write without professing to be in love."

"But," replied the marchioness, "if the poet is really in love, he has no need of professing a feeling which he possesses."

As she was speaking, the marchioness drew out of her pocket a paper which she offered to His Eminence.

"This is the ode," she said. "It does great honour to the poet, for

it is admitted to be a masterpiece by all the *litterati* in Rome, and Donna Lucrezia knows it by heart."

The cardinal read it over and returned it, smiling and remarking that, as he had no taste for Italian poetry, she must give herself the pleasure of translating it into French rhyme if she wished him to admire it.

"I write only French prose," answered the marchioness, "and a prose translation destroys half the beauty of poetry. I am satisfied with writing occasionally a little Italian poetry without any pretension to poetical fame."

Those words were accompanied by a very significant glance in my direction.

"I should consider myself fortunate, madame, if I could obtain the happiness of admiring some of your poetry."

"Here is a sonnet of Her Ladyship's," said Cardinal S— C—.

I took it respectfully and prepared to read it, but the amiable marchioness told me to put it in my pocket and return it to the cardinal the next day, although she did not think the sonnet worth so much trouble. "If you should happen to go out in the morning," said Cardinal S— C—, "you could bring it back and dine with me." Cardinal Acquaviva immediately answered for me, "He will be sure to go out purposely."

With a deep reverence, which expressed my thanks, I left the room quietly and returned to my apartment, very impatient to read the sonnet. Yet, before satisfying my wish, I could not help making some reflections on the situation. I began to think myself somebody since the gigantic stride I had made this evening at the cardinal's assembly. The Marchioness de G— had shown in the most open way the interest she felt in me and, under cover of her grandeur, had not hesitated to compromise herself publicly by the most flattering advances. But who would have thought of disapproving? A young abbé like me, without any importance whatever, who could scarcely pretend to her high protection! True, but she was precisely the woman to grant it to those who, feeling themselves unworthy of it, dared not show any pretensions to her patronage. On that head, my modesty must be evident to everyone, and the marchioness would certainly have insulted me had she supposed me capable of sufficient vanity to fancy that she felt the slightest inclination for me. No, such a piece of self-conceit was not in accordance with my nature. Her cardinal himself had invited me to dinner. Would he have done so if he had admitted the possibility of the beautiful marchioness feeling anything for me? Of course not, and he gave me an invitation to dine with him only because he had understood, from the very words of the lady that I was just the sort of person with whom they could converse for a few hours without any risk—to be sure, without any risk whatever. Oh, Master Casanova! do you really think so?

Well, why should I put on a mask before my readers? They may think me conceited if they please, but the fact of the matter is that I felt sure of having made a conquest of the marchioness. I congratulated

myself because she had taken the first, most difficult and most important step. Had she not done so, I should never have dared to lay siege to her even in the most approved fashion; I should never have even ventured to dream of winning her. It was only this evening that I thought she might replace Lucrezia. She was beautiful, young, full of wit and talent; she was fond of literary pursuits and very powerful in Rome; what more was necessary? Yet I thought it would be good policy to appear ignorant of her inclination for me and to let her suppose from the very next day that I was in love with her, but that my love appeared to me hopeless. I knew that such a plan was infallible, because it saved her dignity. It seemed to me that Father Georgi himself would be compelled to approve such an undertaking, and I had remarked with great satisfaction that Cardinal Acquaviva had expressed his delight at Cardinal S— C—'s invitation, an honour which he had never yet bestowed on me himself. This affair might have very important results for me.

I read the marchioness's sonnet and found it easy, flowing and well written. It was composed in praise of the King of Prussia, who had just conquered Silesia by a masterly stroke. As I was copying it, the idea struck me to personify Silesia and to make her, in answer to the sonnet, bewail that Love (supposed to be the author of the sonnet of the marchioness) could applaud the man who had conquered her, when that conqueror was the sworn enemy of Love.

It is impossible for a man accustomed to write poetry to abstain when a happy subject smiles upon his delighted imagination. If he attempted to smother the poetical flame running through his veins, it would consume him. I composed my sonnet, keeping the same rhymes as in the original, and, well pleased with my muse, I went to bed.

The next morning the Abbé Gama came in just as I had finished recopying my sonnet and said he would breakfast with me. He complimented me upon the honour conferred on me by the invitation of the Cardinal S— C—.

"But be prudent," he added, "for His Eminence has the reputation of being jealous."

I thanked him for his friendly advice, taking care to assure him that I had nothing to fear because I did not feel the slightest inclination for the handsome marchioness.

Cardinal S— C— received me with great kindness, mingled with dignity, to make me realise the importance of the favour he was bestowing upon me.

"What do you think of the sonnet?" he inquired.

"Monsignor, it is perfectly written, and, what is more, it is a charming composition. Allow me to return it to you with my thanks."

"She has much talent. I wish to show you ten stanzas of her composition, my dear abbé, but you must promise to be very discreet about it."

"Your Eminence may rely on me."

He opened his bureau and brought forth the stanzas, of which he

was the subject. I read them, found them well written, but devoid of enthusiasm; they were the work of a poet and expressed love in the words of passion, but were not pervaded by that peculiar feeling by which true love is so easily discerned. The worthy cardinal was doubtless guilty of a very great indiscretion, but self-love is the cause of so many injudicious steps! I asked His Eminence whether he had answered the stanzas.

"No," he replied, "I have not; but would you feel disposed to lend me your poetical pen—under the seal of secrecy, of course?"

"As to secrecy, monsignor, I promise it faithfully; but I am afraid the marchioness will remark to difference between your style and mine."

"She has nothing of my composition," said the cardinal. "I do not think she supposes me a fine poet, and for that reason your stanzas must be written in such a manner that she will not esteem them above my abilities."

"I will write them with pleasure, monsignor, and Your Eminence can form an opinion; if they do not seem good enough to be worthy of you, they need not be given to the marchioness."

"That is well said. Will you write them at once?"

"What! now, monsignor? It is not like prose."

"Well, well! Try to let me have them to-morrow."

We dined alone, and His Eminence complimented me upon my excellent appetite, which he remarked was as good as his own; but I was beginning to understand my eccentric host, and, to flatter him, I answered that he praised me more than I deserved and that my appetite was inferior to his. The singular compliment delighted him, and I saw all the use I could make of His Eminence.

Towards the end of the dinner, as we were conversing, the marchioness made her appearance and, as a matter of course, without being announced. Her look threw me into raptures; I thought her a perfect beauty. She did not give the cardinal time to go forward to meet her, but sat down near him, while I remained standing, according to etiquette.

Without appearing to notice me, the marchioness ran wittily over various topics until coffee was brought in. Then, addressing herself to me, she told me to sit down, just as if she was bestowing charity upon me.

"By the by, abbé," she said, a minute after, "have you read my sonnet?"

"Yes, madame, and I have had the honour to return it to His Eminence. I have found it so perfect that I am certain it must have cost you a great deal of time."

"Time?" exclaimed the cardinal. "Oh! you do not know the marchioness."

"Monsignor," I replied, "nothing can be done well without time, and that is why I have not dared to show to Your Eminence an answer to the sonnet which I wrote in half an hour."

"Let us see it, abbé," said the marchioness. "I want to read it."

"Answer of Silesia to Love." This title brought the most fascinating blushes on her countenance. "But Love is not mentioned in the sonnet," exclaimed the cardinal. "Wait," said the marchioness, "we must respect the idea of the poet."

She read the sonnet over and over and thought that the reproaches addressed by Silesia to Love were very just. She explained my idea to the cardinal, making him understand why Silesia was offended at having been conquered by the King of Prussia.

"Ah, I see, I see!" exclaimed the cardinal, full of joy. "Silesia is a woman... and the King of Prussia... Oh! oh! that is really a fine idea!" And the good cardinal laughed heartily for more than a quarter of an hour. "I must copy that sonnet," he added, "indeed I must have it."

"The abbé," said the marchioness, "will save you the trouble; I will dictate it to him."

I prepared to write, but His Eminence suddenly exclaimed, "My dear marchioness, this is wonderful; he has kept the same rhymes as in your own sonnet; did you observe it?"

The beautiful marchioness gave me then a look of such expression that she completed her conquest. I understood that she wanted me to know the cardinal as well as she knew him; it was a kind of partnership in which I was quite ready to play my part.

As soon as I had written the sonnet under the charming woman's dictation, I took my leave, but not before the cardinal had told me that he expected me to dinner the next day.

I had plenty of work before me, for the ten stanzas I had to compose were of the most singular character, and I lost no time in shutting myself up in my room to think of them. I had to keep my balance between two points of equal difficulty, and I felt that great care was indispensable. I had to place the marchioness in such a position that she could pretend to believe the cardinal the author of the stanzas and at the same time compel her to find out that I had written them and that I was aware of her knowing it. It was necessary to speak so carefully that not one expression should breathe even the faintest hope on my part, and yet to make my stanzas blaze with the ardent fire of my love under the thin veil of poetry. As for the cardinal, I knew well enough that, the better the stanzas were written, the more disposed he would be to sign them. All I wanted was clearness, so difficult to obtain in poetry, while a little doubtful darkness would have been accounted sublime by my new Mæcenas. But, although I wanted to please him, the cardinal was only a secondary consideration and the handsome marchioness the principal object.

As the marchioness in her verses had made a pompous enumeration of every physical and moral quality of His Eminence, it was of course natural that he should return the compliment, and here my task was easy. At last, having mastered my subject well, I began my work and, giving full career to my imagination and to my feelings, composed the

ten stanzas and gave the finishing stroke with these two beautiful lines from Ariosto:

*Le angeliche bellezze nate al cielo
Non si ponno celar sotto alcun velo.*

Rather pleased with my production, I presented it the next day to the cardinal, modestly saying that I doubted whether he would accept the authorship of so ordinary a composition. He read the stanzas twice over without taste or expression and said at last that they were indeed not much, but exactly what he wanted. He thanked me particularly for the two lines from Ariosto, saying that they would assist in throwing the authorship upon himself, as they would prove to the lady for whom they were intended that he had not been able to write them without borrowing. And, as if to offer me some consolation, he told me that, in recopying the lines, he would take care to make a few mistakes in the rhythm to complete the illusion.

We dined earlier than the day before, and I withdrew immediately after dinner so as to give him leisure to make a copy of the stanzas before the arrival of the lady.

The next evening I met the marchioness at the entrance of the palace and offered her my arm to come out of her carriage. The instant she alighted, she said to me, "If ever your stanzas and mine become known in Rome, you may be sure of my enmity."

"Madame, I do not understand what you mean."

"I expected you to answer me in this manner," replied the marchioness, "but recollect what I have said."

I left her at the door of the reception-room and, thinking that she was really angry with me, went away in despair. "My stanzas," said I to myself, "are too fiery; they compromise her dignity, and her pride is offended at my knowing the secret of her intrigue with Cardinal S— C—. Yet I feel certain that the dread she expresses of my want of discretion is only feigned, it is but a pretext to turn me out of her favour. She has not understood my reserve! What would she have done, if I had painted her in the simple apparel of the golden age, without any of those veils which modesty imposes upon her sex!" I was sorry I had not done so. I undressed and went to bed.

My head was scarcely on the pillow when the Abbé Gama knocked at my door. I pulled the door-string, and, coming in, he said, "My dear sir, the cardinal wishes to see you, and I am sent by the beautiful marchioness and Cardinal S— C—, who desire you to come down."

"I am very sorry, but I cannot go; tell them the truth; I am ill in bed."

As the abbé did not return, I judged that he had faithfully acquitted himself of the commission, and I spent a quiet night. I was not yet dressed in the morning when I received a note from Cardinal S— C— inviting me to dinner, saying that he had just been bled and that he wanted to speak to me; he concluded by entreating me to come to him early, even if I did not feel well.

The invitation was pressing; I could not guess what had caused it, but the tone of the letter did not forebode anything unpleasant. I went to church, where I was sure that Cardinal Acquaviva would see me, and he did. After mass, His Eminence beckoned to me.

"Are you truly ill?" he inquired.

"No, monsignor, I was only sleepy."

"I am very glad to hear it; but you are wrong, for you are loved. Cardinal S— C— has been bled this morning."

"I know it, monsignor. The cardinal tells me so in this note, in which he invites me to dine with him, with Your Excellency's permission."

"Certainly. But this is amusing! I did not know that he wanted a third person."

"Will there be a third person?"

"I do not know, and I have no curiosity about it."

The cardinal left me, and everybody imagined that His Eminence had spoken to me of state affairs.

I went to my new Mæcenas, whom I found in bed.

"I am compelled to observe a strict diet," he said to me. "I shall have to let you dine alone, but you will not lose by it, as my cook does not know it. What I wanted to tell you is that your stanzas are, I am afraid, too pretty, for the marchioness adores them. If you had read them to me in the same way that she does, I could never have made up my mind to offer them."

"But she believes them to be written by Your Eminence?"

"Of course."

"That is the essential point, monsignor."

"Yes; but what should I do if she took it into her head to compose some new stanzas for me?"

"You would answer through the same pen, for you can dispose of me night and day and rely upon the utmost secrecy."

"I beg you to accept this small present; it is some negrilla snuff from Habana, which Cardinal Acquaviva has given me."

The snuff was excellent, but the object which contained it was still better. It was a splendid gold-enamelled box. I received it with respect and with the expression of the deepest gratitude.

If His Eminence did not know how to write poetry, at least he knew how to be generous and in a delicate manner, and that science is, at least in my estimation, superior to the other for a great nobleman.

At noon, and much to my surprise, the beautiful marchioness made her appearance in the most elegant morning toilet.

"If I had known you were in good company," she said to the cardinal, "I would not have come."

"I am sure, dear marchioness, you will not find our dear abbé in the way."

"No, for I believe him to be honest and true."

I kept at a respectful distance, ready to go away with my splendid snuff-box at the first jest she might hurl at me.

The cardinal asked her if she intended to remain to dinner.

"Yes," she answered, "but I shall not enjoy my dinner, for I hate to eat alone."

"If you would honour him so far, the abbé would keep you company."

She gave me a gracious look, but without uttering one word.

This was the first time I had had anything to do with a woman of quality, and that air of patronage, whatever kindness might accompany it, always put me out of temper, for I thought it made love out of the question. However, as we were in the presence of the cardinal, I fancied that she might be right in treating me in that fashion.

The table was laid out near the cardinal's bed, and the marchioness, who ate hardly anything, encouraged me in my good appetite.

"I have told you that the abbé is equal to me in that respect," said S— C—.

"I truly believe," answered the marchioness, "that he does not remain far behind you. But," added she with flattery, "you are more dainty in your tastes."

"Would Her Ladyship be so good as to tell me in what I have appeared to her to be a mere glutton? For in all things I like only dainty and exquisite morsels."

"Explain what you mean by saying 'in all things,'" said the cardinal. Taking the liberty of laughing, I composed a few impromptu verses in which I named all I thought dainty and exquisite. The marchioness applauded, saying that she admired my courage.

"My courage, madame, is due to you, for I am as timid as a hare when I am not encouraged; you are the author of my impromptu."

"I admire you. As for myself, were I encouraged by Apollo himself, I could not compose four lines without paper and ink."

"Only give way boldly to your genius, madame, and you will produce poetry worthy of heaven."

"That is my opinion, too," said the cardinal. "I entreat you to give me permission to show your ten stanzas to the abbé."

"They are not very good, but I have no objection, provided it remains between us."

The cardinal gave me then the stanzas composed by the marchioness, and I read them aloud with all the expression, all the feeling necessary to such reading.

"How well you read those stanzas!" said the marchioness. "I can hardly believe them to be my own composition; I thank you very much. But have the goodness to give the benefit of your reading to the stanzas which His Eminence has written in answer to mine. They surpass them much."

"Do not believe it, my dear abbé," said the cardinal, handing them to me. "Yet try not to let them lose anything through your reading."

There was certainly no need of His Eminence enforcing upon me such a recommendation; it was my own poetry. I could not have read it otherwise than in my best style, especially when I had before me

the beautiful woman who had inspired it and when, besides, Bacchus was in me, giving courage to Apollo, and the beautiful eyes of the marchioness were fanning into an ardent blaze the fire already burning through my whole being.

I read the stanzas with so much expression that the cardinal was enraptured, but I brought a deep carnation tint upon the cheeks of the lovely marchioness when I came to the description of those beauties which the imagination of the poet is allowed to guess at, but which I could not, of course, have gazed upon. She snatched the paper from my hands with passion, saying that I was adding verses of my own; it was true, but I did not confess it. I was all aflame, and the fire was scorching her as well as me.

The cardinal having fallen asleep, she rose and went to take a seat on the balcony; I followed her. She had rather a high seat; I stood opposite to her, so that her knee touched the fob-pocket in which was my watch. What a position! Taking hold gently of one of her hands, I told her that she had ignited in my soul a devouring flame, that I adored her and that, unless some hope was left to me of finding her sensible to my sufferings, I was determined to fly away from her forever.

"Yes, beautiful marchioness, pronounce my sentence."

"I fear you are a libertine and an unfaithful lover."

"I am neither one nor the other."

With these words I folded her in my arms and pressed upon her lovely lips, as pure as a rose, an ardent kiss, which she received with the best possible grace. This kiss, the forerunner of the most delicious pleasures, had imparted to my hands the greatest boldness; I was on the point of . . . but the marchioness, changing her position, entreated me so sweetly to respect her that, enjoying new voluptuousness through my very obedience, I not only abandoned an easy victory, but even begged her pardon, which I soon read in the most loving look.

She spoke of Lucrezia and was pleased with my discretion. She then alluded to the cardinal, doing her best to make me believe that there was nothing between them but a feeling of innocent friendship. Of course I had my opinion on that subject, but it was to my interest to appear to believe every word she uttered. We recited together lines from our best poets, and all the time she was sitting down and I standing before her, with my looks rapt in the contemplation of the most lovely charms, to which I remained insensible in appearance, for I had made up my mind not to press her that evening for greater favours than those I had already received.

The cardinal, waking from his long and peaceful siesta, got up and joined us in his nightcap and good-naturedly inquired whether we had not felt impatient at his protracted sleep. I remained until dark and went home highly pleased with my day's work, but determined to keep my ardent desire in check until the opportunity for complete victory offered itself.

From that day the charming marchioness never ceased to give me

the marks of her particular esteem without the slightest constraint; I was reckoning upon the carnival, which was close at hand, feeling certain that, the more I should spare her delicacy, the more she would endeavour to find the opportunity of rewarding my loyalty and of crowning with happiness my loving constancy. But fate ordained otherwise; Dame Fortune turned her back upon me at the very moment when the Pope and Cardinal Acquaviva were thinking of giving me a really good position.

The Holy Father had congratulated me upon the beautiful snuff-box presented to me by Cardinal S— C—, but he had been careful never to name the marchioness. Cardinal Acquaviva expressed openly his delight at his brother-cardinal having given me a taste of his negrillo snuff in so splendid an envelope; the Abbé Gama, finding me so forward on the road to success, did not venture to counsel me any more, and the virtuous Father Georgi gave me but one piece of advice—namely, to cling to the lovely marchioness and not to make any other acquaintances.

Such was my position—truly a brilliant one—when on Christmas Day the lover of Barbara Dalacqua entered my room, locked the door and threw himself on the sofa, exclaiming that I saw him for the last time.

“I only come to beg of you some good advice.”

“On what subject can I advise you?”

“Take this and read it; it will explain everything.”

It was a letter from his mistress; the contents were these:

“I am pregnant of a child, the pledge of our mutual love; I can no longer have any doubt of it, my beloved, and I forewarn you that I have made up my mind to quit Rome alone and go away to die where it may please God if you refuse to take care of me and save me. I would suffer anything, do anything, rather than let my father discover the truth.”

“If you are a man of honour,” I said, “you cannot abandon the poor girl. Marry her in spite of your father, in spite of her own, and live together honestly. The eternal Providence of God will watch over you and help you in your difficulties.”

My advice seemed to bring calm to his mind, and he left me more composed.

At the beginning of January, 1744, he called again, looking very cheerful. “I have hired the top floor of the house next to Barbara’s dwelling,” he said. “She knows it, and to-night I will gain her apartment through one of the windows of the garret, and we will make all our arrangements to enable me to carry her off. I have made up my mind; I have decided upon taking her to Naples, and I will take with us the servant, who, sleeping in the garret, had to be made a confidante of.”

“God speed you, my friend!”

A week afterwards, towards eleven o’clock at night, he entered my room accompanied by an abbé.

"What do you want so late?"

"I wish to introduce you to this handsome abbé."

I looked up and, to my consternation, recognised Barbara.

"Has anyone seen you enter the house?" I inquired.

"No; and if we had been seen, what of it? It is only an abbé. We now pass every night together."

"I congratulate you."

"The servant is our friend; she has consented to follow us, and all our arrangements are completed."

"I wish you every happiness. Adieu. I beg you to leave me."

Three or four days after that visit, as I was walking with the Abbé Gama towards the Villa Medicis, he told me deliberately that there would be an execution during the night in the Piazza di Spagna.

"What kind of execution?"

"The *bargello* or his lieutenant will come to execute some *ordine santissimo* or to visit some suspicious dwelling in order to arrest and carry off some person who does not expect anything of the sort."

"How do you know it?"

"His Eminence has to know it, for the Pope would not venture to encroach upon his jurisdiction without asking his permission."

"And His Eminence has given it?"

"Yes, one of the Holy Father's auditors came for that purpose this morning."

"But the cardinal might have refused?"

"Of course; but such a permission is never denied."

"And if the person to be arrested happened to be under the protection of the cardinal—what then?"

"His Eminence would give timely warning to that person."

We changed the conversation, but the news had disturbed me. I fancied that the execution threatened Barbara and her lover, for her father's house was under the Spanish jurisdiction. I tried to see the young man, but could not succeed in meeting him, and I was afraid lest a visit at his home or at M. Dalacqua's dwelling might implicate me. Yet it is certain that this last consideration would not have stopped me if I had been positively sure that they were threatened; had I felt satisfied of their danger, I would have braved everything.

About midnight, as I was ready to go to bed and just as I was opening my door to take the key from outside, an abbé rushed panting into my room and threw himself on a chair. It was Barbara; I guessed what had taken place, and, foreseeing all the evil consequences her visit might have for me, deeply annoyed and very anxious, I upbraided her for having taken refuge in my room and entreated her to go away.

Fool that I was! Knowing that I was only ruining myself without any chance of saving her, I ought to have compelled her to leave my room, I ought to have called for the servants if she had refused to withdraw. But I had not courage enough—or, rather, I involuntarily obeyed the decrees of destiny.

When she heard my order to go away, she threw herself on her knees and, melting into tears begged, entreated my pity!

Where is the heart of steel which is not softened by the tears, by the prayers of a pretty and unfortunate woman? I gave way, but I told her that it was ruin for both of us.

"No one saw me, I am certain," she replied, "when I entered the mansion and came up to your room, and I consider my visit here a week ago as most fortunate; otherwise, I never could have known which was your room."

"Alas! how much better if you had never come! But what has become of your lover?"

"The *sbirri* have carried him off, as well as the servant. I will tell you all about it. My lover had informed me that a carriage would wait to-night at the foot of the flight of steps before the Church of Trinità del Monte, and that he would be there himself. I entered his room through the garret window an hour ago. There I put on this disguise and, accompanied by the servant, proceeded to meet him. The servant walked a few yards before me and carried a parcel of my things. At the corner of the street, one of the buckles of my shoes being unfastened, I stopped an instant, and the servant went on, thinking that I was following her. She reached the carriage, got into it, and, as I was getting nearer, the light from a lantern disclosed to me some thirty *sbirri*; at the same instant one of them got on the driver's box and drove off at full speed, carrying off the servant, whom they must have mistaken for me, and my lover, who was in the coach awaiting me. What could I do at such a fearful moment? I could not go back to my father's house, and I followed my first impulse, which brought me here. And here I am! You tell me that my presence will cause your ruin; if it is so, tell me what to do; I feel I am dying; but find some expedient, and I am ready to do anything, even to lay my life down, rather than be the cause of your ruin."

But she wept more bitterly than ever.

Her position was so sad that I thought it worse even than mine, although I could almost fancy I saw ruin before me, despite my innocence.

"Let me conduct you to your father," I said. "I feel sure of obtaining your pardon."

But my proposal only enhanced her fears.

"I am lost," she exclaimed. "I know my father. Ah! reverend sir, turn me out into the street and abandon me to my miserable fate."

No doubt I ought to have done so, and I would have done it if the consciousness of what was due to my own interest had been stronger than my feeling of pity. But her tears! I have often said it—and those amongst my readers who have experienced it must be of the same opinion—there is nothing on earth more irresistible than two beautiful eyes shedding tears, when the owner of those eyes is handsome, virtuous and unhappy. I found myself physically unable to send her away.

"My poor girl," I said at last, "when daylight comes—and that will not be long, for it is past midnight—what do you intend to do?"

"I must leave the palace," she replied, sobbing. "In this disguise no one can recognise me; I will leave Rome and walk straight before me until I fall to the ground, dying with grief and fatigue."

With these words she fell on the floor. She was choking; I could see her face turn blue; I was in the greatest distress.

I took off her neckband, unlaced her stays under the abbé's dress, threw cold water in her face and finally succeeded in bring her back to consciousness.

The night was extremely cold, and there was no fire in my room. I advised her to get into my bed, promising to respect her.

"Alas! reverend sir, pity is the only feeling with which I can now inspire anyone."

And, to speak the truth, I was too deeply moved, and, at the same time, too full of anxiety, to leave room in me for any desire. Having induced her to go to bed and her extreme weakness preventing her from doing anything for herself, I undressed her and put her to bed, thus proving once more that compassion will silence the most imperious requirements of nature, in spite of all the charms which would, under other circumstances, excite to the highest degree the senses of a man. I lay down near her in my clothes and woke her at daybreak. Her strength was somewhat restored, she dressed herself alone, and I left my room, telling her to keep quiet until my return. I intended to proceed to her father's house and solicit her pardon, but, having perceived some suspicious-looking men loitering about the palace, I thought it wise to change my mind and went to a coffee-house.

I soon ascertained that a spy was watching my movements at a distance; but I did not appear to notice him, and, having taken some chocolate and stored a few biscuits in my pocket, I returned towards the palace, apparently without any anxiety or hurry, always followed by the same individual. I judged that the *bargello*, having failed in his project, was now reduced to guesswork, and I was strengthened in that view of the case when the gatekeeper of the palace told me, without my asking any question, as I came in, that an arrest had been attempted during the night and had not succeeded. While he was speaking, one of the auditors of the Vicar General called to inquire when he could see the Abbé Gama. I saw that no time was to be lost and went up to my room to decide upon what was to be done.

I began by making the poor girl eat a couple of biscuits soaked in some Canary wine, and I took her afterwards to the top story of the palace, where, leaving her in a not very decent closet which was not used by anyone, I told her to wait for me.

My servant came soon after, and I ordered him to lock the door of my room as soon as he finished cleaning it and to bring me the key at the Abbé Gama's apartment, where I was going. I found Gama in conversation with the auditor sent by the Vicar General. As soon

as he had dismissed him, he came to me and ordered his servant to serve the chocolate. When we were left alone, he gave me an account of his interview with the auditor, who had come to entreat His Eminence to give orders to turn out of his palace a person who was supposed to have taken refuge in it about midnight. "We must wait," said the abbé, "until the cardinal is visible, but I am quite certain that, if anyone has taken refuge here unknown to him, His Eminence will compel that person to leave the palace." We then spoke of the weather and other trifles until my servant brought my key. Judging that I had at least an hour to spare, I bethought myself of a plan which alone could save Barbara from shame and misery.

Feeling certain that I was unobserved, I went up to my poor prisoner and made her write the following words in French:

"I am an honourable girl, monsignor, though I am disguised in the dress of an abbé. I entreat Your Eminence to allow me to give my name only to you and in person. I hope that, prompted by the great goodness of your soul, Your Eminence will save me from dishonour."

I gave her the necessary instructions as to sending the note to the cardinal, assuring her that he would have her brought to him as soon as he read it.

"When you are in his presence," I added, "throw yourself on your knees, tell him everything without any concealment, except as regards your having passed the night in my room. You must be sure not to mention that circumstance, for the cardinal must remain in complete ignorance of my knowing anything whatever of this intrigue. Tell him that, seeing your lover carried off, you rushed to his palace and ran upstairs as far as you could go, and that, after a most painful night, Heaven inspired you with the idea of writing to him to entreat his pity. I feel certain that, one way or the other, His Eminence will save you from dishonour, and it certainly is the only chance you have of being united to the man you love so dearly."

She promised to follow my instructions faithfully, and, coming down, I had my hair dressed and went to church, where the cardinal saw me. I then went out and returned only for dinner, during which the only subject of conversation was the adventure of the night. Gama alone said nothing, and I followed his example, but I understood from all the talk going on round the table that the cardinal had taken my poor Barbara under his protection. That was all I wanted, and, thinking that I had nothing more to fear, I congratulated myself *in petto* upon my stratagem, which had, I thought, proved a master-stroke. After dinner, finding myself alone with Gama, I asked him what was the meaning of it all, and this is what he told me:

"A father, whose name I do not know yet, had requested the assistance of the Vicar General to prevent his son from carrying off a young girl, with whom he intended to leave the States of the Church; the pair had arranged to meet at midnight in this very square, and the Vicar, having previously obtained the consent of our cardinal, as I told you yesterday, gave orders to the *bargello* to dispose his men in such

a way as to catch the young people in the very act of running away and to arrest them. The orders were executed, but the *sbirri* found out, when they returned to the *bargello*, that they had met with only a half-success, the woman who got out of the carriage with the young man not belonging to that species likely to be carried off. Soon afterwards a spy informed the *bargello* that, at the very moment the arrest was executed, he had seen a young abbé run away very rapidly and take refuge in this palace, and the suspicion immediately arose that it might be the missing young lady in the disguise of an ecclesiastic. The *bargello* reported to the Vicar General the failure of his men, as well as the account given by the spy, and the prelate, sharing the suspicion of the police, sent to His Eminence, our master, requesting him to have the person in question, man or woman, turned out of the palace, unless such person should happen to be known to His Excellency and therefore above suspicion. Cardinal Acquaviva was made acquainted with these circumstances at nine this morning through the auditor you met in my room, and he promised to have the person sent away unless it was one of his household.

"According to this promise, the cardinal ordered the palace to be searched, but in less than a quarter of an hour the major-domo received orders to stop, and the only reason for these new instructions must be this:

"I am told by the major-domo that at nine o'clock exactly a very handsome young abbé, whom he immediately judged to be a girl in disguise, asked him to deliver a note to His Eminence and that the cardinal, after reading it, had desired the said abbé to be brought to his apartment, which he has not left since. As the order to stop searching the palace was given immediately after the introduction of the abbé to the cardinal, it is easy enough to suppose that this ecclesiastic is no other than the young girl missed by the police, who took refuge in the palace, in which she must have passed the whole night."

"I suppose," said I, "that His Eminence will give her up to-day, if not to the *bargello*, at least to the Vicar General."

"No, not even to the Pope himself," answered Gama. "You have not yet a right idea of the protection of our cardinal, and that protection is evidently granted to her, since the young person is not only in the palace of His Eminence, but also in his own apartment and under his own guardianship."

The whole affair being in itself very interesting, my attention could not appear extraordinary to Gama, however suspicious he might be naturally, and I was certain that he would not have told me anything if he had guessed the share I had taken in the adventure and the interest I must feel in it.

The next day Gama came to my room with a radiant countenance and informed me that the Vicar General was aware of the ravisher being my friend and supposed that I was likewise a friend of the girl, as she was the daughter of my French teacher. "Everybody is satisfied that you knew the whole affair," he added, "and it is natural

to suspect that the poor girl spent the night in your room. I admire your prudent reserve during our conversation of yesterday. You kept so well on your guard that I would have sworn you knew nothing whatever of the affair."

"And it is the truth," I answered, very seriously. "I have only this moment learned all the circumstances from you. I know the girl, but I have not seen her for six weeks, since I gave up my French lessons. I am much better acquainted with the young man, but he never confided his project to me. However, people may believe whatever they please. You say that it is natural for the girl to have passed the night in my room, but you will not mind my laughing in the face of those who accept their own suppositions as realities."

"That, my dear friend," said the abbé, "is one of the vices of the Romans; happy those who can afford to laugh at it; but this slander may do you harm, even in the mind of our cardinal."

As there was no performance at the Opera that night, I went to the cardinal's reception; I found no difference towards me either in the cardinal's manners or in those of any other person, and the marchioness was even more gracious than usual.

After dinner on the following day Gama informed me that the cardinal had sent the young girl to a convent, in which she would be well treated at His Eminence's expense, and that he was certain she would leave it only to become the wife of the young doctor.

"I should be very happy if it should turn out so," I replied, "for they are both most estimable people."

Two days afterwards I called upon Father Georgi, and he told me, with an air of sorrow, that the great news of the day in Rome was the failure of the attempt to carry off Dalacqua's daughter and that all the honour of the intrigue was given to me, which displeased him much. I told him what I had already told Gama, and he appeared to believe me, but he added that in Rome people did not want to know things as they truly were, but only as they wished them to be.

"It is known that you have been in the habit of going every morning to Dalacqua's house; it is known that the young man often called upon you; that is quite enough. People do not care to know the circumstances which might counteract the slander, but only those likely to give it new force, for slander is vastly relished in the Holy City. Your innocence will not prevent the whole adventure being booked to your account if, in forty years' time, you were proposed as Pope in the Conclave."

During the following days the fatal adventure began to cause me more annoyance than I could express, for everyone mentioned it to me, and I could see clearly that people pretended to believe what I said only because they did not dare to do otherwise. The marchioness told me jeeringly that the Signora Dalacqua had contracted peculiar obligations towards me, but my sorrow was very great when, during the last days of the carnival, I remarked that Cardinal Acquaviva's manner

had become constrained, although I was the only person who observed the change.

The noise made by the affair was, however, beginning to subside when in the first days of Lent the cardinal desired me to come to his private room and spoke as follows:

"The affair of the Dalacqua girl is now over; it is no longer spoken of, but the verdict of the public is that you and I have profited by the clumsiness of the young man who intended to carry her off. In reality I care little for such a verdict, for under similar circumstances I should always act in a similar manner, and I do not wish to know that which no one can compel you to confess and which, as a man of honour, you must not admit. If you had no previous knowledge of the intrigue and had actually turned the girl out of your room (supposing she did come to you), you would have been guilty of a wrong and cowardly action, because you would have sealed her misery for the remainder of her days, and it would not have caused you to escape the suspicion of being an accomplice, while at the same time it would have attached to you the odium of dastardly treachery. Notwithstanding all I have just said, you can easily imagine that, in spite of my utter contempt for all gossiping fools, I cannot openly defy them. I therefore feel myself compelled to ask you not only to quit my service, but even to leave Rome. I undertake to supply you with an honourable pretext for your departure, so as to insure you the continuation of the respect which you may have secured through the marks of esteem I have bestowed upon you. I promise you to whisper in the ear of any person you may choose, and even to inform everybody, that you are going on an important mission which I have entrusted to you. You have only to name the country where you want to go to; I have friends everywhere and can recommend you to such purpose that you will be sure to find employment. My letters of recommendation will be in my own handwriting, and nobody need know where you are going. Meet me to-morrow at the Villa Negroni and let me know where my letters are to be addressed. You must be ready to start within a week. Believe me, I am sorry to lose you; but the sacrifice is forced upon me by the most absurd prejudice. Go now and do not let me witness your grief."

He spoke the last words because he saw my eyes filling with tears, and he did not give me time to answer. Before leaving his room, I had the strength of mind to compose myself, and I put on such an air of cheerfulness that the Abbé Gama, who took me to his room to drink some coffee, complimented me upon my happy looks.

"I am sure," he said, "that they are caused by the conversation you have had with His Eminence."

"You are right; but you do not know the sorrow at my heart which I try not to show outwardly."

"What sorrow?"

"I am afraid of failing in a difficult mission which the cardinal has entrusted me with this morning. I am compelled to conceal how little

confidence I feel in myself in order not to lessen the good opinion His Eminence is pleased to entertain of me."

"If my advice can be of any service to you, pray dispose of me; but you are quite right to show yourself calm and cheerful. Is it any business to transact in Rome?"

"No; it is a journey I shall have to undertake in a week or ten days."

"Which way?"

"Towards the west."

"Oh! I am not curious to know."

I went out alone and took a walk in the Villa Borghese, where I spent two hours wrapped in dark despair. I liked Rome, I was on the high road to fortune, and suddenly I found myself in the abyss, without knowing where to go and with all my hopes scattered to the winds. I examined my conduct, I judged myself severely, I could not find myself guilty of any crime save that of too much kindness, but I perceived how right the good Father Georgi had been. My duty was not only to take no part in the intrigue of the two lovers, but also to change my French teacher the moment I heard of it; but this was like calling in a doctor after death has struck the patient. Besides, young as I was, having no experience yet of misfortune and still less of the wickedness of society, it was very difficult for me to have that prudence which a man gains only by long intercourse with the world.

"Where shall I go?" This was the question which seemed to me impossible of solution. I thought of it all through the night and through the morning, but I thought in vain; after Rome I was indifferent where I went to!

In the evening, not caring for any supper, I had gone to my room; the Abbé Gama came to me with a request from the cardinal not to accept any invitation to dinner for the next day, as he wanted to speak to me. I therefore waited upon His Eminence the next day at the Villa Negroni; he was walking with his secretary, whom he dismissed the moment he saw me. As soon as we were alone, I gave him all the particulars of the intrigue of the two lovers and expressed in the most vivid manner the sorrow I felt at leaving his service.

"I have no hope of success," I added, "for I am certain that Fortune will smile upon me only as long as I am near Your Eminence."

For nearly an hour I told him all the grief with which my heart was bursting, weeping bitterly; yet I could not move him from his decision. Kindly but firmly he pressed me to tell him to what part of Europe I wanted to go, and despair as much as vexation made me name Constantinople.

"Constantinople!" he exclaimed, moving back a step or two.

"Yes, monsignor, Constantinople," I repeated, wiping away my tears.

The prelate, a man of great wit, but a Spaniard to the backbone, after remaining silent a few minutes, said, with a smile:

"I am glad you have not chosen Ispahan, as I should have felt rather embarrassed. When do you wish to go?"

"This day week, as Your Eminence has ordered me."

"Do you intend to sail from Naples or from Venice?"

"From Venice."

"I will give you such a passport as will be needed, for you will find two armies in winter quarters in the Romagna. It strikes me that you may tell everybody that I sent you to Constantinople, for nobody will believe you."

This diplomatic suggestion nearly made me smile. The cardinal told me that I should dine with him, and he left me to join his secretary.

When I returned to the palace, thinking of the choice I had made, I said to myself, "Either I am mad or I am obeying the impulse of a mysterious genius which sends me to Constantinople to work out my fate." I was only astonished that the cardinal had so readily accepted my choice. "Without any doubt," I thought, "he did not wish me to believe that he had boasted of more than he could achieve, in telling me that he had friends everywhere. But to whom can he recommend me in Constantinople? I have not the slightest idea, but to Constantinople I must go."

I dined alone with His Eminence; he made a great show of peculiar kindness and I of great satisfaction, for my self-pride, stronger even than my sorrow, forbade me to let anyone guess that I was in disgrace. My deepest grief was, however, to leave the marchioness, with whom I was in love and from whom I had not obtained any important favour.

Two days afterwards the cardinal gave me a passport for Venice and a sealed letter addressed to Osman Bonneval, Pasha of Caramania, in Constantinople. There was no need of my saying anything to anyone, but, as the cardinal had not forbidden me to do it, I showed the address on the letter to all my acquaintances.

The Chevalier de Lezze, the Venetian Ambassador, gave me a letter for a wealthy Turk, a very worthy man who had been his friend; Don Gaspar and Father Georgi asked me to write to them, but the Abbé Gama laughed and said he was quite sure I was not going to Constantinople.

I went to take my farewell of Donna Cecilia, who had just received a letter from Lucrezia, imparting the news that she would soon be a mother. I also called upon Angélique and Don Francisco, who had lately been married and had not invited me to the wedding.

When I called to get Cardinal Acquaviva's final instructions, he gave me a purse containing one hundred ounces, worth seven hundred sequins. I had three hundred more, so that my fortune amounted to one thousand sequins; I kept two hundred and for the rest took a letter of exchange upon a Ragusan who was established in Ancona. I left Rome in the coach with a lady going to Our Lady of Loretto to fulfil a vow made during a severe illness of her daughter, who accompanied her. The young lady was ugly; my journey was a rather tedious one.

CHAPTER II

I ARRIVED in Ancona on the 25th day of February, 1744, and put up at the best inn. Pleased with my room. I told mine host to prepare for me a good meat dinner; but he answered that during Lent all good Catholics eat nothing but fish.

"The Holy Father has granted me permission to eat meat."

"Let me see your permission."

"He gave it to me by word of mouth."

"Reverend sir, I am not obliged to believe you."

"You are a fool."

"I am master in my own house and beg you will go to some other inn."

Such an answer, coupled to a most unexpected notice to quit, threw me into a violent passion. I was swearing, raving, screaming, when suddenly a grave-looking individual made his appearance in my room and said to me:

"Sir, you are wrong in calling for meat when in Ancona fish is much better; you are wrong in expecting the landlord to believe you on your bare word; and, if you have obtained permission from the Pope, you have been wrong in soliciting it at your age; you have been wrong in not asking for such permission in writing; you are wrong in calling the host a fool because it is a compliment that no man is likely to accept in his own house; and, finally, you are wrong in making such an uproar."

Far from increasing my bad temper, this individual, who had entered my room only to treat me to a sermon, made me laugh.

"I willingly plead guilty, sir," I answered, "to all the counts which you have alleged against me; but it is raining, it is getting late, I am tired and hungry, and therefore you will easily understand that I do not feel disposed to change my quarters. Will you give me some supper, as the landlord refuses to do so?"

"No," he replied, with great composure, "because I am a good Catholic, and I fast. But I will undertake to make it all right for you with the landlord, who will give you a good supper."

Thereupon he went downstairs, and I, comparing my hastiness to his calm, acknowledged the man worthy of teaching me some lessons. He soon came up again and informed me that peace was signed and I would be served immediately.

"Will you not take supper with me?"

"No, but I will keep you company."

I accepted his offer and, to learn who he was, told him my name, giving myself the title of secretary to Cardinal Acquaviva.

"My name is Sancio Pico," he said, "I am a Castilian, and the *provveditore* of the army of H.C.M., which is commanded by Count de Gages under the orders of the generalissimo, the Duke of Modena."

My excellent appetite astonished him, and he inquired whether I had

dined. "No," said I, and I saw his countenance assume an air of satisfaction.

"Are you not afraid such a supper will hurt you?" he said.

"On the contrary, I hope it will do me a great deal of good."

"Then you deceived the Pope?"

"No, for I did not tell him that I had no appetite, but only that I liked meat better than fish."

"If you feel disposed to hear some good music," he said a moment after, "follow me to the next room; the prima donna of Ancona lives there."

The words "prima donna" interested me at once, and I followed him. I saw, sitting before a table, a woman already somewhat advanced in age, with two young girls and two boys, but I looked in vain for the actress, whom Don Sancio Pico at last presented to me in the shape of one of the two boys, who was remarkably handsome and might have been seventeen. I thought he was a *castrato* who, as is the custom in Rome, performed all the parts of a prima donna. The mother presented to me her other son, likewise very good-looking, but more manly than the *castrato*, although younger. His name was Petronio, and, keeping up the transformations of the family, he was the first female dancer at the opera. The eldest girl, who was also introduced to me, was named Cecilia and studied music; she was twelve years old; the youngest, called Marina, was only eleven and, like her brother Petronio, was consecrated to the worship of Terpsichore. Both the girls were very pretty.

The family came from Bologna and lived upon the talent of its members; cheerfulness and amiability replaced wealth with them.

Bellino (such was the name of the *castrato*), yielding to the entreaties of Don Sancio, rose from the table, went to the harpsichord and sang with the voice of an angel and with delightful grace. The Castilian listened with his eyes closed in an ecstasy of enjoyment, but I, far from closing my eyes, gazed into Bellino's, which seemed to dart amorous lightnings upon me. I could discover in him some of the features of Lucrezia and the graceful manner of the marchioness, and everything betrayed a beautiful woman, for his dress concealed but imperfectly the most beautiful bosom. The consequence was that, in spite of his having been introduced as a man, I fancied that the so-called Bellino was a disguised beauty, and, my imagination taking at once the highest flight, I became thoroughly enamoured.

We spent two very pleasant hours, and I returned to my room, accompanied by the Castilian. "I intend to leave very early to-morrow morning for Sinigaglia," he said, "with the Abbé Vilmarcati, but I expect to return for supper the day after to-morrow," I wished him a happy journey, saying that we would most likely meet on the road, as I should probably leave Ancona myself on the same day, after paying a visit to my banker.

I went to bed thinking of Bellino and of the impression he had made upon me; I was sorry to go away without having proved to him that I was not the dupe of his disguise. Accordingly I was well pleased to see

him enter my room in the morning as soon as I had opened my door. He came to offer me the services of his younger brother Petronio during my stay in Ancona, instead of my engaging a *valet de place*. I willingly agreed to the proposal and sent Petronio to get coffee for all the family.

I asked Bellino to sit on my bed, with the intention of making love to him and of treating him like a girl, but the two young sisters ran into my room and disturbed my plans. Yet the trio formed before me a very pleasing sight; they represented natural beauty and artless cheerfulness of three different kinds: unobtrusive familiarity, theatrical wit, pleasing playfulness and pretty Bolognese manners, which I witnessed for the first time; all this would have sufficed to cheer me if I had been downcast. Cecilia and Marina were two sweet rosebuds, which, to bloom in all their beauty, required only the inspiration of love, and they would certainly have had the preference over Bellino if I had seen in him only the miserable outcast of mankind—or, rather, the pitiful victim of sacerdotal cruelty—for, in spite of their youth, the two amiable girls offered on their dawning bosoms the precious image of womanhood.

Petronio came with the coffee, which he poured out, and I sent some to the mother, who never left the room. Petronio was a true male harlot by taste and profession. The species is not scarce in Italy, where the offence is not regarded with the wild and ferocious intolerance of England and Spain. I had given him one sequin to pay for the coffee and told him to keep the change, and, to show me his gratitude, he gave me a voluptuous kiss with half-open lips, supposing in me a taste which I was very far from entertaining. I disabused him, but he did not seem the least ashamed. I told him to order dinner for six persons, but he remarked that he would order it for only four, as he had to keep his dear mother company; she always took her dinner in bed. Everyone to his taste, I thought, and I let him do as he pleased.

Two minutes after he had gone, the landlord came to my room and said, "Reverend sir, the persons you have invited have each the appetite of two men at least; I give you notice of it, because I must charge accordingly." "All right," I replied, "but let us have a good dinner."

When I was dressed, I thought I ought to pay my compliments to the compliant mother. I went to her room and congratulated her upon her children. She thanked me for the present I had given to Petronio and began to make me the confidant of her distress. "The manager of the theatre," she said, "is a miser who has given us only fifty Roman crowns for the whole carnival. We have spent them for our living, and, to return to Bologna, we shall have to walk and beg our way." Her confidence moved my pity, so I took a gold quadruple from my purse and offered it to her; she wept for joy and gratitude.

"I promise you another gold quadruple, madame," I said, "if you will confide in me entirely. Confess that Bellino is a pretty woman in disguise."

"I can assure you it is not so, although he has the appearance of a woman."

"Not only the appearance, madame, but the tone, the manners; I am a good judge."

"Nevertheless, he is a boy, for he has had to be examined before he could sing on the stage here."

"And who examined him?"

"My lord bishop's chaplain."

"A chaplain?"

"Yes, and you may satisfy yourself by enquiring from him."

"The only way to clear my doubts would be to examine him myself."

"You may if he has no objections, but truly I cannot interfere, as I do not know what your intentions are."

"They are quite natural."

I returned to my room and sent Petronio for a bottle of Cyprus wine. He brought the wine and seven sequins, the change for the doubloon I had given him. I divided them among Bellino, Cecilia and Marina and begged the two young girls to leave me alone with their brother.

"Bellino, I am certain that your natural conformation is different from mine; my dear, you are a girl."

"I am a man, but a *castrato*; I have been examined."

"Allow me to examine you likewise, and I will give you a doubloon."

"I cannot, for it is evident that you love me, and such love is condemned by religion."

"You did not raise these objections with the bishop's chaplain."

"He was an elderly priest, and besides, he only just glanced at me."

"I will know the truth," said I, extending my hand boldly.

But he repulsed me and rose from his chair. His obstinacy vexed me, for I had already spent fifteen or sixteen sequins to satisfy my curiosity.

I began my dinner with a very bad humour, but the excellent appetite of my pretty guests brought me round, and I soon thought that, after all, cheerfulness was better than sulking, and I resolved to make up for my disappointment with the two charming sisters, who seemed well disposed to enjoy a frolic.

I began by distributing a few innocent kisses right and left as I sat between them near a good fire, eating chestnuts which we wetted with Cyprus wine. I embraced and fondled both girls, and Cecilia, as well as Marina, delighted in the game. Seeing that Bellino was smiling, I kissed him likewise, and, his half-open ruffle attracting my hand, I ventured and went in without resistance. The chisel of Praxiteles had never carved a finer bosom!

"Oh! this is enough," I exclaimed. "I can no longer doubt that you are a beautifully formed woman!"

"It is the defect of all *castrati*," he replied.

"No, it is the perfection of all handsome women. Bellino, believe me, I am enough of a good judge to distinguish between the deformed breast of a *castrato* and that of a beautiful woman, and your alabaster bosom belongs to a young beauty of seventeen summers."

Who does not know that love, inflamed by all that can excite it, never stops in young people until it is satisfied and that one favour granted kindles the wish for a greater one? I had begun well, I tried to go further and smother with burning kisses that which my hand was pressing so ardently, but the false Bellino, as if he had only just been aware of the illicit pleasure I was enjoying, rose and ran away. Anger increased in me the ardour of love, and feeling the necessity of calming myself either by satisfying my ardent desires or by evaporating them, I begged Cecilia, Bellino's pupil, to sing a few Neapolitan airs.

I then went out to call upon the banker, from whom I took a letter of exchange at sight upon Bologna for the amount I had to receive from him, and on my return, after a light supper with the two young sisters, I prepared to go to bed, having previously instructed Petronio to order a carriage for the morning.

I was just locking my door when Cecilia, half undressed, came in to say that Bellino begged me to take him to Rimini, where he was engaged to sing in an opera to be performed after Easter.

"Go and tell him, my dear little Seraph, that I am ready to do what he wishes if he will only grant me in your presence what I desire: I want to know for a certainty whether he is a man or a woman."

She left me and returned soon, saying that Bellino had gone to bed, but that, if I would postpone my departure for one day only, he promised to satisfy me on the morrow.

"Tell me the truth, Cecilia, and I will give you six sequins."

"I cannot earn them, for I have never seen him naked and I cannot swear to his being a girl. But he must be a man, otherwise he would not have been allowed to perform here."

"Well, I will remain until the day after to-morrow, provided you keep me company to-night."

"Do you love me very much?"

"Very much indeed if you show yourself very kind."

"I will be very kind, for I love you dearly likewise. I will go and tell my mother."

"Of course you have a lover?"

"I never had one."

She left my room, and in a short time came back full of joy, saying that her mother believed me an honourable man—she, of course, meant a generous one. Cecilia locked the door and, throwing herself in my arms, covered me with kisses. She was pretty, charming, but I was not in love with her, and I was not able to say to her as to Lucrezia, "You have made me so happy!" But she said it herself, and I did not feel much flattered, although I pretended to believe her. When I woke up in the morning, I gave her a tender salutation, and, presenting her with three doubloons (which must have particularly delighted the mother), I sent her away without wasting any time in promising everlasting constancy—a promise as absurd as it is trifling and which the most virtuous man ought never to make even to the most beautiful of women.

After breakfast I sent for mine host and ordered an excellent supper for five persons, feeling certain that Don Sancio, whom I expected in the evening, would not refuse to honour me by accepting my invitation, and with that idea I made up my mind to go without my dinner. The Bolognese family did not require to imitate my diet to insure a good appetite for the evening.

I then summoned Bellino to my room and claimed the performance of his promise; but he laughed, remarked that the day was not past yet and said that he was certain of travelling with me.

"I fairly warn you that you cannot accompany me unless I am fully satisfied."

"Well, I will satisfy you."

"Shall we go and take a walk together?"

"Willingly; I will dress myself."

While I was waiting for him, Marina came in with a dejected countenance, inquiring how she had deserved my contempt.

"Cecilia has passed the night with you, Bellino will go with you to-morrow, I am the most unfortunate of us all."

"Do you want money?"

"No, for I love you."

"But, Marinetta, you are too young."

"I am much stronger than my sister."

"Perhaps you have a lover."

"Oh! no."

"Very well, we can try this evening."

"Good! Then I will tell mother to prepare clean sheets for to-morrow morning; otherwise everybody here would know that I slept with you."

I could not help admiring the fruits of a theatrical education and was much amused.

Bellino came back, we went out together and took our walk towards the harbour. There were several vessels at anchor and amongst them a Venetian ship and a Turkish tartan. We went on board the first, which we visited with interest, but, not seeing anyone of my acquaintance, we rowed towards the Turkish tartan, where the most romantic surprise awaited me. The first person I met on board was the beautiful Greek woman I had left in Ancona seven months before, when I went away from the lazaretto. She was seated near the old captain, of whom I inquired, without appearing to notice his handsome slave, whether he had any fine goods to sell. He took us to his cabin, but, as I cast a glance towards the charming Greek, she expressed by her looks all her delight at such an unexpected meeting.

I pretended not to be pleased with the goods shown by the Turk and under the impulse of inspiration told him that I would willingly buy something pretty which would take the fancy of his better half. He smiled and, the Greek slave having whispered a few words to him, left the cabin. The moment he was out of sight, this new Aspasia threw herself in my arms, saying, "Now is your time!" I would not be found wanting in courage, but I had not yet reached the goal of my wishes

when the unfortunate girl, hearing her master, tore herself from my arms with a deep sigh and, placing herself cunningly in front of me, gave me time to repair the disorder of my dress, which might have cost me my life, or at least all I possessed, to compromise the affair. In that curious situation I was highly amused at the surprise of Bellino, who stood there trembling like an aspen leaf.

The trifles chosen by the handsome slave cost me only thirty sequins. *Spolaitis*, she said to me in her own language, and, the Turk telling her that she ought to kiss me, she covered her face with her hands and ran away. I left the ship more sad than pleased, for I regretted that, in spite of her courage, she should have enjoyed only an incomplete pleasure. As soon as we were in our rowboat, Bellino, who had recovered from his fright, told me that I had just made him acquainted with a phenomenon the reality of which he could not admit and which gave him a very strange idea of my nature; that, as far as the Greek girl was concerned, he could not make her out, unless I should assure him that every woman in her country was like her. "How unhappy they must be!" he added.

"Do you think that coquettes are happier?" I asked.

"No, but I think that, when a woman yields to love, she should not be conquered before she has fought with her own desires; she should not give way to the first impulse of a lustful desire and abandon herself to the first man who takes her fancy, like an animal—the slave of sense. You must confess that the Greek woman gave you an evident proof that you had taken her fancy, but that she has at the same time given you a proof not less certain of an effrontery which exposed her to the shame of being repulsed, for she could not possibly know whether you would feel as well disposed towards her as she felt towards you. She is very handsome, and it all turned out well, but the adventure has thrown me into a whirl of agitation which I cannot yet control."

I might easily have put a stop to Bellino's perplexity and rectified the mistake he was labouring under; but such a confession would not have ministered to my self-love, and I held my peace, for, if Bellino happened to be a girl, as I suspected, I wanted her to be convinced that I attached, after all, but very little importance to the great affair and that it was not worth while employing cunning expedients to obtain it.

We returned to the inn, and towards evening, hearing Don Sancio's travelling carriage roll into the yard, I hastened to meet him and told him that I hoped he would excuse me if I had felt certain that he would not refuse me the honour of his company to supper with Bellino. He thanked me politely for the pleasure I was so delicately offering to him, and accepted my invitation.

The most exquisite dishes, the most delicious wines of Spain and, more than everything else, the cheerfulness and the charming voices of Bellino and Cecilia, gave the Castilian five delightful hours. He left me at midnight, saying that he could not declare himself thoroughly pleased unless I promised to sup with him the next evening with the

same guests. It would compel me to postpone my departure for another day, but I accepted.

As soon as Don Sancio had gone, I called upon Bellino to fulfil his promise, but he answered that Marinetta was waiting for me and that, as I was not going away the next day, he would find an opportunity of satisfying my doubts; and, wishing me good night, he left the room.

Marinetta, as cheerful as a lark, ran to lock the door and came back to me, her eyes beaming with ardour. She was more formed than Cecilia, although one year younger, and seemed anxious to convince me of her superiority, but, thinking that the fatigue of the preceding night might have exhausted my strength, she unfolded all the amorous ideas of her mind, the whole interlarded with the foolish talk natural to her age. I made out that she was afraid of my not finding her a maiden and of my reproaching her about it. Her anxiety pleased me, and I gave her a new confidence by telling her that only a fool could be angry with a girl for such a reason.

"Sleep, my darling," I assured her, "will prove our friend and, our strength renewed by repose, will reward you in the morning for what you may suppose lost time."

And truly, after a quiet sleep, the morning was for her a succession of fresh triumphs, and I crowned her happiness by sending her away with three doubloons, which she took to her mother and which gave the good woman an insatiable desire to contract new obligations towards Providence.

I went out to get some money from the banker, as I did not know what might happen during my journey; I had enjoyed myself, but I had spent too much; yet there was Bellino, who, if a girl, was not to find me less generous than I had been with the two young sisters. It was to be decided during the day, and I fancied that I was sure of the result.

There are some persons who pretend that life is only a succession of misfortunes, which is as much as to say that life itself is a misfortune; but, if life is a misfortune, death must be exactly the reverse and therefore death must be happiness, since death is the very reverse of life. That deduction may appear too finely drawn. But those who say that life is a succession of misfortunes are certainly either ill or poor; for, if they enjoyed good health, if they had cheerfulness in their heart and money in their purse, if they had for their enjoyment a Cecilia and a Marinetta—and a still lovelier beauty in prospect—they would soon entertain a very different opinion of life! I hold them to be a race of pessimists, recruited amongst beggarly philosophers and knavish, atrabilious theologians. If pleasure does exist and if life is necessary to enjoy pleasure, then life is happiness. There are misfortunes, as I know by experience; but the very existence of such misfortunes proves that the sum-total of happiness is greater. Because a few thorns are to be found in a basket full of roses, is the existence of those beautiful flowers to be denied? No, it is a slander to deny that life is happiness.

When I am in a dark room, it pleases me greatly to see through a window an immense horizon before me.

As supper-time was drawing near, I went to Don Sancio, whom I found in magnificently furnished apartments. The table was loaded with silver plate, and his servants were in livery. He was alone, but all his guests arrived soon after me—Cecilia, Marina and Bellino, who, either by caprice or from taste was dressed as a woman. The two young sisters, prettily arranged, looked charming, but Bellino in his female costume so completely threw them into the shade that my last doubt vanished.

"Are you satisfied," I said to Don Sancio, "that Bellino is a woman?"

"Woman or man, what do I care! I think he is a very pretty *castrato*, and I have seen many as good-looking as he."

"But are you sure he is a *castrato*?"

"*Vdlgame Dios!*" answered the grave Castilian, "I have not the slightest wish to ascertain the truth."

Oh, how widely different our thoughts were! I admired in him the wisdom of which I was so much in need and did not venture upon any more indiscreet questions. During the supper, however, my greedy eyes could not leave that charming being; my vicious nature caused me to feel intense voluptuousness in believing him to be of that sex to which I wanted him to belong.

Don Sancio's supper was excellent and, as a matter of course, superior to mine; otherwise, the pride of the Castilian would have felt humbled. As a general rule, men are not satisfied with what is *good*; they want the *best*, or, to speak more to the point, the *most*. He gave us white truffles, several sorts of shell-fish, the best fish of the Adriatic, dry champagne, peralta, sherry and Pedro-Ximenes wines.

After that supper worthy of Lucullus, Bellino sang with a voice of such beauty that it deprived us of the small amount of reason left in us by the excellent wine. His movements, the expression of his looks, his gait, his walk, his countenance, his voice and, above all, my own instinct, which told me that I could not possibly feel for a *castrato* what I felt for Bellino, confirmed me in my hopes; yet it was necessary that my eyes should ascertain the truth.

After many compliments and a thousand thanks, we took leave of the grand Spaniard and went to my room, where the mystery was at last to be unravelled. I called upon Bellino to keep his word, or I threatened I would leave him the next morning at daybreak.

I took him by the hand, and we seated ourselves near the fire. I dismissed Cecilia and Marina and said to him:

"Bellino, everything must have an end; you have promised; it will soon be over. If you are what you represent yourself to be, I will let you go back to your room; if you are what I believe you to be and if you consent to remain with me to-night, I will give you one hundred sequins, and we will start together to-morrow morning."

"You must go alone and forgive me if I cannot fulfil my promise. I am what I told you, and I can neither reconcile myself to the idea of

exposing my shame before you nor lay myself open to the terrible consequences that might follow the solution of your doubts."

"There can be no consequences, since there will be an end to it at the moment I have assured myself that you are unfortunate enough to be what you say, and, without ever mentioning the circumstance again, I promise to take you with me to-morrow and leave you at Rimini."

"No, my mind is made up; I cannot satisfy your curiosity."

Driven to madness by his words, I was very near using violence, but, subduing my angry feelings, I endeavoured to succeed by gentle means. He opposed a very strong resistance. I repeated my efforts, but Bellino, rising suddenly, repulsed me.

His sisters came to my room, but I dismissed them, sending word to their brother that he might go with me without any fear of further indiscretion on my part. Yet, in spite of the conviction I thought I had acquired, Bellino, even such as I believed him to be, filled my thoughts; I could not make it out.

Early the next morning I left Ancona with him, distracted by the tears of the two charming sisters and loaded with the blessings of the mother, who, with beads in hand, mumbled her *pasternoster*, and repeated her constant theme, *Dio provvederà*.

The trust placed in Providence by most of those persons who earn their living by some profession forbidden by religion is neither absurd nor false nor deceitful; it is real and even godly, for it flows from an excellent source. Whatever may be the ways of Providence, human beings must always acknowledge it in its action, and those who call upon Providence independently of all external consideration must, at the bottom, be worthy, although guilty of transgressing its laws.

*Pulchra Laverna,
Da mihi fallere; da justo sanctoque videri;
Noctem peccatis, et fraudibus objice nubem.*

Such was the way in which, in the days of Horace, robbers addressed their goddess, and I recollect a Jesuit who told me once that Horace could not have known his own language if he said *justo sanctoque*; but there were ignorant men even amongst the Jesuits, and robbers most likely have but little respect for the rules of grammar.

The next morning I started with Bellino, who, believing me to be undeceived, could suppose that I would not show any more curiosity about him, but we had not been a quarter of an hour together when he found out his mistake, for I could not let my looks fall upon his splendid eyes without feeling in me a fire which the sight of a man could not have ignited. I told him that all his features were those of a woman and that I wanted the testimony of my eyes before I could feel perfectly satisfied. "Bellino, the impression you produce upon me, this sort of magnetism, your bosom worthy of Venus herself, which you have once abandoned to my eager hand, the sound of your voice, every movement of yours, all assure me that you do not belong to

my sex. Let me see for myself, and, if my conjectures are right, depend upon my faithful love; if, on the contrary, I find that I have been mistaken, you can rely upon my friendship. If you refuse me, I shall be compelled to believe that you are cruelly enjoying my misery and that you have learned in the most accursed school that the best way of preventing a young man from curing himself of an amorous passion is to excite it constantly; but you must agree with me that, to put such tyranny in practice, it is necessary to hate the person it is practised upon, and, if that be so, I ought to call upon my reason to give me the strength necessary to hate you likewise."

I went on speaking for a long time; Bellino did not answer, but he seemed deeply moved. At last I told him that, in the fearful state to which I was reduced by his resistance, I should be compelled to treat him without any regard for his feelings and find out the truth by force. He answered with much warmth and dignity: "Recollect that you are not my master, that I am in your hands because I had faith in your promise and that, if you use violence, you will be guilty of murder. Order the postillion to stop, I will get out of the carriage, and you may rely upon my not complaining of your treatment."

Those few words were followed by a torrent of tears, a sight which I never could resist. I felt myself moved in the inmost recesses of my soul, and I almost thought that I had been wrong. I say "almost" because, had I been convinced of it, I would have thrown myself at his feet, entreating pardon; but, not feeling myself competent to stand in judgment in my own cause, I satisfied myself by remaining dull and silent and never uttered one word until we were only half a mile from Sinigaglia, where I intended to take supper and remain for the night. Having fought long enough with my own feelings, I said to him, "We might have spent a little time in Rimini like good friends if you had felt any friendship for me, for, with a little kind compliance, you could have easily cured me of my passion."

"It would not cure you," answered Bellino, courageously but with a sweetness of tone which surprised me. "No, you would not be cured, whether you found me to be man or woman, for you are in love with me independently of my sex, and the certainty you would acquire would make you furious. In such a state, should you find me inexorable, you would very likely give way to excesses which would afterwards cause you deep sorrow."

"You expect to make me admit that you are right, but you are completely mistaken, for I feel that I should remain perfectly calm and that, by complying with my wishes, you would gain my friendship."

"I tell you again that you would become furious."

"Bellino, that which has made me furious is the sight of your charms, either too real or too completely deceiving, the power of which you cannot affect to ignore. You have not been afraid to ignite my amorous fury, how can you expect me to believe you now, when you pretend

to fear it and when I am only asking you to let me know something which, if it be as you say, will only disgust me?"

"Ah! 'disgust' you! I am quite certain of the contrary. Listen to me. Were I a girl, I feel I could not resist loving you, but, being a man, it is my duty not to grant what you desire, for your passion, now very natural, would then become monstrous. Your ardent nature would be stronger than your reason, and your reason itself would easily come to the assistance of your senses and of your nature. That violent clearing-up of the mystery, were you to obtain it, would leave you deprived of all control over yourself. Disappointed in not finding what you had expected, you would satisfy your passion upon that which you would find, and the result would, of course, be an abomination. How can you, intelligent as you are, flatter yourself that, finding me to be a man, you could all at once cease to love me? Would the charms which you now see in me cease to exist then? Perhaps their power would, on the contrary, be enhanced, and your passion, becoming brutal, would lead you to take any means your imagination suggested to gratify it. You would persuade yourself that you might change me into a woman—or, what is worse, that you might change yourself into one. Your passion would invent a thousand sophisms to justify your love, decorated with the fine appellation of friendship, and you would not fail to allege hundreds of similarly disgusting cases in order to excuse your conduct. You would certainly never find me compliant; and how am I to know that you would not threaten me with death?"

"Nothing of the sort would happen, Bellino," I answered, rather tired of the length of his argument, "positively nothing, and I am sure you are exaggerating your fears. Yet I am bound to tell you that, even if all you say should happen, it seems to me that to allow what can strictly be considered only as a temporary fit of insanity would prove a less evil than to render incurable a disease of the mind which reason would soon cut short."

Thus does a poor philosopher reason when he takes it into his head to argue at those periods during which a passion raging in his soul makes all its faculties wander. To reason well, we must be under the sway neither of love nor of anger, for those two passions have one thing in common, which is that, in their excess, they lower us to the condition of brutes acting only under the influence of their predominating instinct, and, unfortunately, we are never more disposed to argue than when we feel ourselves under the influence of either of those two powerful human passions.

We arrived at Sinigaglia late at night, and I went to the best inn and, after choosing a comfortable room, ordered supper. As there was but one bed in the room, I asked Bellino in as calm a tone as I could assume whether he would have a fire lighted in another chamber, and my surprise may be imagined when he answered quietly that he had no objection to sleep in the same bed with me. Such an answer, however unexpected, was necessary to dispel the angry feelings under which I was labouring. I guessed that I was near the *dénouement* of the

romance, but I was very far from congratulating myself, for I did not know whether the *dénouement* would prove agreeable or not. I felt, however, a real satisfaction at having conquered and was sure of my self-control in case the senses, my natural instinct, led me astray. But if I found myself in the right, I thought I could expect the most precious favours.

We sat down to supper opposite each other, and during the meal his words, his countenance, the expression of his beautiful eyes, his sweet and voluptuous smile, everything seemed to announce that he had had enough of playing a part which must have proved as painful to him as to me.

A weight was lifted off my mind, and I contrived to shorten the supper as much as possible. As soon as we had left the table, my amiable companion called for a night-lamp, undressed and went to bed. I was not long in following him, and the reader will soon know the nature of a *dénouement* so long and so ardently desired; in the meantime I beg to wish him as happy a night as the one which was then awaiting me.

CHAPTER 12

DEAR READER, I said enough at the end of the last chapter to make you guess what happened, but no language would be powerful enough to make you realise all the happiness which that charming being had in store for me. *She* came close to me the moment I was in bed; without uttering one word, our lips met, and I found myself in ecstasy. I could not take my gaze off that beautiful face, which was all aflame with the ardour of love. Bellino felt bound to make me forget my sufferings, and to reward me by an ardour equal to the fire kindled by her charms.

The happiness I gave her increased mine twofold, for it has always been my weakness to compose the four-fifths of my enjoyment from the sum-total of the happiness which I gave the charming being from whom I derived it. But such a feeling must necessarily cause hatred for old age, which can still receive pleasure but can no longer give enjoyment to another. And youth runs away from old age because it is its most cruel enemy.

An interval of repose became necessary. Our senses were not tired out, but they required the rest which renews their sensitiveness and restores the necessary buoyancy.

Bellino was the first to break our silence.

"Dearest," she said, "are you satisfied now? Have you found me truly loving?"

"Truly loving. Ah! traitress that you are! Do you, then, confess that I was not mistaken when I guessed that you were a charming woman? And, if you truly loved me, tell me how you could contrive to defer your happiness and mine so long?"

"Listen to me," she replied, "and I will tell you everything. My

name is Thérèse. My father, a poor clerk in the Institute of Bologna, had let an apartment in his house to the celebrated Salimberi, a *castrato* and a delightful musician. He was young and handsome, he became attached to me, and I felt flattered by his affection and by the praise he lavished upon me. I was only twelve years of age; he proposed to teach me music, and, finding that I had a fine voice, he cultivated it carefully, and in less than a year I could accompany myself on the harpsichord. His reward was that which his love for me induced him to ask, and I granted the reward without feeling any humiliation, for I worshipped him. Of course, men like yourself are much above men of his species, but Salimberi was an exception. His beauty, his manners, his talent and the rare qualities of his soul made him superior in my eyes to all the men I had seen until then. He was modest and reserved, rich and generous, and I doubt whether he could have found a woman able to resist him; yet I never heard him boast of having seduced any. The mutilation practised upon his body had made him a monster, but he was an angel by his rare qualities and endowments.

"Salimberi was at that time educating a boy of the same age as myself, who was in Rimini with a music teacher. The father of the boy, who was poor and had a large family, seeing himself near death, had thought of having his unfortunate son altered so that he should become the support of his brothers with his voice. The name of the boy was Bellino; the good woman whom you have just seen in Ancona was his mother, and everybody believes that she is mine.

"I had belonged to Salimberi for about a year when he announced to me one day, weeping bitterly, that he was compelled to leave me to go to Rome, but he promised to see me again. The news threw me into despair. He had arranged everything for the continuance of my musical education, but, as he was preparing for his departure, my father died very suddenly after a short illness, and I was left an orphan.

"Salimberi had not courage enough to resist my tears and entreaties; he made up his mind to take me to Rimini and place me in the same house where his young *protégé* was being educated. We reached Rimini and put up at an inn; after a short rest Salimberi left me to call upon the teacher of music and to make all necessary arrangements with him respecting me; but he soon returned, looking sad and unhappy; Bellino had died the day before.

"As he was thinking of the grief which the loss of the young man would cause the mother, he was struck with the idea of bringing me back to Bologna under the name of Bellino, where he could arrange for my board with the mother of the deceased Bellino, who, being very poor, would find it to her advantage to keep the secret. 'I will give her,' he said, 'everything necessary for the completion of your musical education, and in four years I will take you to Dresden (he was in the service of the Elector of Saxony, King of Poland), not as a girl, but as a *castrato*. There we will live together without giving anyone cause for scandal, and you will remain with me and minister to my

happiness until I die. All we have to do is to represent you as Bellino, and it is very easy, as nobody knows you in Bologna. Bellino's mother alone will know the secret; her other children saw their brother only when he was very young and can have no suspicion. But, if you love me, you must renounce your sex, lose even the remembrance of it and leave immediately for Bologna, dressed as a boy and under the name of Bellino. You must be very careful lest anyone find out that you are a girl; you must sleep alone and dress in private, and when your bosom is formed—as it will be in a year or two—it will only be thought a deformity not uncommon amongst *castrati*. Besides, before leaving you, I will give you a small instrument and teach you how to fix it in such a manner that, if you had at any time to submit to an examination, you would easily be mistaken for a man. If you accept my plan, I feel certain that we can live together in Dresden without losing the good graces of the Queen, who is very religious. Tell me now whether you will accept my proposal?

"He could not entertain any doubt of my consent, for I adored him. As soon as he had made a boy of me, we left Rimini for Bologna, where we arrived late in the evening. A little gold made everything right with Bellino's mother; I gave her the name of 'mother,' and she kissed me, calling me her 'dear son.' Salimberi left us and my heart was deeply grieved at his departure, for he bade me farewell after showing me how to attach the instrument.

"People laugh at forebodings; I do not believe in them myself, but the foreboding of evil which almost broke my heart as he gave me his farewell kiss did not deceive me. I felt the cold shivering of death run through me; I felt I was looking at him for the last time, and I fainted away. Alas! my fears proved only too prophetic. He died a year ago in the Tyrol in the prime of life, with the calmness of a true philosopher. His death compelled me to earn my living with the assistance of my musical talent. My mother advised me to continue to represent myself to be a *castrato*, in the hope of her being able to take me to Rome. I agreed to do so, for I did not feel sufficient energy to decide upon any other plan. In the meantime she accepted an offer for the Ancona Theatre, and Petronio took the part of first female dancer; in this way we played the comedy of *The World Turned Upside Down*.

"After Salimberi, you are the only man I have known, and, if you like, you can restore me to my original state and let me give up the name of Bellino, which I hate since the death of my protector and which begins to inconvenience me. I have appeared at only two theatres, and each time I have been compelled to submit to a scandalous, degrading examination, because everywhere I am thought to have too much the appearance of a girl, and I am admitted only after the shameful test has brought conviction. Until now, fortunately, I have had to deal only with old priests, who in their good faith have been satisfied with a very slight examination and have made a favourable report to the bishop; but I might fall into the hands of some young abbé, and the test would then become a more severe one. Besides, I find myself

exposed to the daily persecutions of two sorts of beings: those who, like you, cannot and will not believe me to be a man, and those who, for the satisfaction of their disgusting propensities, are delighted at my being so or find it advantageous to suppose me so. The last particularly annoy me! Their tastes are so infamous, their habits so low, that I fear I shall murder one of them some day when I can no longer control the rage into which their obscene language throws me. Out of pity, my beloved angel, be generous and, if you love me, oh! free me from this state of shame and degradation! Take me with you. I do not ask to become your wife—that would be too much happiness; I will merely be your friend, your mistress, as I would have been Salimberì's; my heart is pure and innocent; I feel that I can remain faithful to my lover through my whole life. Do not abandon me! The love I have for you is sincere; my affection for Salimberì was innocent; it was born of my inexperience and of my gratitude; it is only with you that I have felt myself truly a woman."

Her emotion, an inexpressible charm which seemed to flow from her lips and enforce conviction, made me shed tears of love and sympathy. I blended my tears with those falling from her beautiful eyes and, deeply moved, promised not to abandon her and to make her the sharer of my fate. Interested in the story, as singular as extraordinary, that she had just narrated and having seen nothing in it that did not bear the stamp of truth, I felt really disposed to make her happy; but I could not believe that I had inspired her with a very deep passion during my short stay in Ancona, many circumstances of which might, on the contrary, have had an opposite effect upon her heart.

"If you loved me truly," I said, "how could you let me sleep with your sisters, out of spite at your resistance?"

"Alas, dearest! think of our great poverty and how difficult it was for me to disclose myself. I loved you; but was it not natural that I should suppose your inclination for me to be only a passing caprice? When I saw you go so easily from Cecilia to Marinetta, I thought that you would treat me in the same manner as soon as your desires were satisfied; I was likewise confirmed in my opinion of your want of constancy and of the little importance you attached to the delicacy of the sentiment of love when I witnessed what you did on board the Turkish vessel without being hindered by my presence; had you loved me, I thought my being present would have made you uncomfortable. I feared to be soon despised, and God knows how much I suffered. You have insulted me, darling, in many different ways, but my heart pleaded in your favour, because I knew you were excited, angry and thirsting for revenge. Did you not threaten me this very day in your carriage! I confess you greatly frightened me, but do not fancy that I gave myself to you out of fear. No, I had made up my mind to be yours from the moment you sent me word by Cecilia that you would take me to Rimini, and your control over your own feelings during a part of our journey confirmed me in my resolution, for I thought I could trust myself to your honour, to your delicacy."

"Give up," I said, "the engagement you have in Rimini; let us proceed on our journey, and, after remaining a couple of days in Bologna, you will go with me to Venice; dressed as a woman and with another name, I would challenge the manager here to find you."

"I accept. Your will shall always be my law. I am my own mistress and give myself to you without any reserve or restriction; my heart belongs to you, and I trust to keep yours."

When I woke in the morning, I admired her lovely face while she was sleeping; all I knew of her came back to my mind; the words which had been spoken by her bewitching mouth, her rare talent, her candour, her feelings so full of delicacy, and her misfortunes—the heaviest of which must have been the false character she had been compelled to assume and which exposed her to humiliation and shame—everything strengthened my resolution to make her the companion of my destiny, whatever it might be, or to follow her fate, for our positions were very nearly the same; and, wishing truly to attach myself seriously to that interesting being, I determined to give to our union the sanction of religion and of law and to take her legally for my wife. Such a step, as I then thought, could but strengthen our love, increase our mutual esteem and insure the approbation of society which could not accept our union unless it was sanctioned in the usual manner.

Thérèse's talents precluded the fear of our being ever in want of the necessaries of life, and, although I did not know in what way my own talents might be made available, I had faith in myself. Our love might have been lessened, she would have enjoyed too great advantages over me, and my self-respect would have suffered too deeply if I had allowed myself to be supported by her earnings only. It might after a time have altered the nature of our feelings; my wife, no longer thinking herself under any obligation to me, might have fancied herself the protecting, instead of the protected, party; and I felt that my love would soon turn into utter contempt, if it should be my misfortune to find her harbouring such thoughts. Although I trusted it would not be so, I wanted, before taking the important step of marriage, to probe her heart, and I resolved to try an experiment which would at once enable me to judge the real feelings of her inmost soul. As soon as she was awake, I spoke to her thus:

"Dearest Thérèse, all you have told me leaves me no doubt of your love for me, and the consciousness you feel of being the mistress of my heart enhances my love for you to such a degree that I am ready to do everything to convince you that you were not mistaken in thinking you had entirely conquered me. I wish to prove to you that I am worthy of the noble confidence you have reposed in me by trusting you with equal sincerity.

"Our hearts must be on a footing of perfect equality. I know you, my dearest Thérèse, but you do not know me yet. I can read in your eyes that you do not mind it, and this proves your great love, but that feeling places me too much below you, and I do not wish you to have

so great an advantage over me. I feel certain that my confidence is not necessary to your love, that you care only to be mine, that your only wish is to possess my heart, and I admire you, my Thérèse; but I should feel humiliated if I found myself either too much above or too much below you. You have entrusted your secrets to me, now listen to mine; but, before I begin, promise me that, when you know everything that concerns me, you will tell me candidly if any change has taken place either in your feelings or in your hopes."

"I promise it faithfully; I promise not to conceal anything from you; but be upright enough not to tell me anything that is not perfectly true, for I warn you that it would be useless. If you tried any artifice in order to find me less worthy of you than I am in reality, you would only succeed in lowering yourself in my estimation. I should be very sorry to see you guilty of any cunning towards me. Have no more suspicions of me than I have of you; tell me the whole truth."

"Here it is. You suppose me wealthy, and I am not so; as soon as what there is now in my purse is spent, I shall have nothing left. You may fancy that I was born a patrician, but my social condition is really inferior to your own. I have no lucrative talents, no profession, nothing to give me the assurance that I am able to earn my living. I have neither relatives nor friends nor claims upon anyone, and I have no serious plan or purpose before me. All I possess is youth, health, courage, some intelligence, honour, honesty and some tincture of letters. My greatest treasure consists in being my own master, perfectly independent and not afraid of misfortune. With all that, I am naturally inclined to extravagance. Lovely Thérèse, you have my portrait. What is your answer?"

"In the first place, dearest, let me assure you that I believe every word you have just uttered, as I would believe in the Gospel; in the second, allow me to tell you that several times in Ancona I judged you to be such as you have just described yourself, but, far from being displeased at such a knowledge of your nature, I was only afraid of some illusion on my part, for I could hope to win you if you were what I thought you to be. In a word, dear one, if it is true that you are poor and a very bad hand at economy, allow me to tell you that I feel delighted because, if you love me, you will not refuse a present from me or despise me for offering it. The present consists of myself, such as I am and with all my faculties. I give myself to you without condition, with no restriction; I am yours, I will take care of you. In future think only of your love for me, but love me exclusively. From this moment I am no longer Bellino. Let us go to Venice, where my talent will keep us both comfortably; if you wish to go anywhere else, let us go where you please."

"I must go to Constantinople."

"Then let us proceed to Constantinople. If you are afraid to lose me through want of constancy, marry me, and your right over me will be strengthened by law. I should not love you better than I do now, but I should be happy to be your wife."

"It is my intention to marry you, and I am delighted that we agree in that respect. The day after to-morrow, in Bologna, you shall be made my legal wife before the altar of God, I swear it to you here in the presence of Love. I want you to be mine, I want to be yours, I want us to be united by the most holy ties."

"I am the happiest of women! We have nothing to do in Rimini; suppose we do not get up; we can have our dinner in bed, and depart to-morrow, well rested after our fatigues."

We left Rimini the next day and stayed for breakfast at Pesaro. As we were getting into the carriage to leave that place, an officer, accompanied by two soldiers, presented himself, inquired for our names and demanded our passports. Bellino had one and gave it, but I looked in vain for mine; I could not find it.

The officer, a corporal, orders the postillion to wait and goes to make his report. Half an hour afterwards he returns and gives Bellino his passport, saying that he can continue his journey, but tells me that his orders are to escort me to the commanding officer, and I follow him.

"What have you done with your passport?" inquires that officer.

"I have lost it."

"A passport is not so easily lost."

"Well, I have lost mine."

"You cannot proceed any further."

"I come from Rome and am going to Constantinople, bearing a letter from Cardinal Acquaviva. Here is the letter, stamped with his seal."

"All I can do for you is to send you to M. de Gages."

I found the famous general standing, surrounded by his staff. I told him all I had already explained to the officer and begged him to let me continue my journey.

"The only favour I can grant you is to put you under arrest till you receive another passport from Rome, delivered under the same name as the one you have given here. To lose a passport is a misfortune which befalls only a thoughtless, giddy man, and the cardinal will in future know better than to put his confidence in a giddy fellow like you."

With these words, he gave orders to take me to the guard-house at St. Mary's Gate, outside the city, as soon as I should have written to the cardinal for a new passport. His orders were executed. I was brought back to the inn, where I wrote my letter and sent it by express to His Eminence, entreating him to forward the document without loss of time direct to the War Office. Then I embraced Thérèse, who was weeping, and, telling her to go to Rimini and wait there for my return, I made her take one hundred sequins. She wished to remain in Pesaro, but I would not hear of it. I had my trunk brought out, I saw Thérèse go away from the inn and was taken to the place appointed by the general.

It is undoubtedly under such circumstances that the most determined optimist finds himself at a loss; but an easy stoicism can blunt the too sharp edge of misfortune.

My greatest sorrow was the heart-grief of Thérèse, who, seeing me torn from her arms at the very moment of our union, was suffocated by the tears which she tried to repress. She would not have left me if I had not made her understand that she could not remain in Pesaro and if I had not promised to join her within ten days, never to be parted again. But fate had decided otherwise.

When we reached the gate, the officer confined me immediately in the guard-house, and I sat down on my trunk. The officer was a taciturn Spaniard, who did not even condescend to honour me with an answer when I told him that I had money and would like to have someone to wait on me. I had to pass the night on a little straw and without food, in the midst of the Spanish soldiers. It was the second night of the sort that my destiny had condemned me to immediately after two delightful nights. My good angel doubtless found some pleasure in bringing such conjunctions before my mind for the benefit of my instruction. At all events, teachings of that description have an infallible effect upon natures of a peculiar stamp.

If you should wish to close the lips of a logician calling himself a philosopher who dares to argue that in this life grief overbalances pleasure, ask him whether he would accept a life entirely without sorrow and happiness. Be certain that he will not answer you or he will shuffle, because if he says "No," he proves that he likes life such as it is, and, if he likes it, he must find it agreeable, which is an utter impossibility if life is painful. Should he, on the contrary, answer in the affirmative, he would declare himself a fool, for it would be as much as to say that he can conceive pleasure arising from indifference, which is absurd nonsense.

Suffering is inherent in human nature, but we never suffer without entertaining the hope of recovery—or, at least, very seldom without such hope—and hope itself is a pleasure. If it happens sometimes that man suffers without any expectation of a cure, he necessarily finds pleasure in the complete certainty of the end of his life; for the worst in all cases must be either a sleep arising from extreme dejection, during which we have the consolation of happy dreams, or the loss of all sensitiveness. But, when we are happy, our happiness is never disturbed by the thought that it will be followed by grief. Therefore pleasure, during its active period, is always complete, without alloy; grief is always soothed by hope.

I imagine you, dear reader, to be at the age of twenty and devoting yourself to the task of making a man of yourself by furnishing your mind with all the knowledge necessary to render you a useful being through the activity of your brain. Someone comes in and tells you: "I bring you thirty years of existence; it is the immutable decree of fate; fifteen consecutive years must be happy and fifteen unhappy. You are at liberty to choose the half with which you wish to begin."

Confess it candidly, dear reader, you will not require much consideration to decide, and you will certainly begin with the unhappy series of years, because you will feel that the expectation of fifteen

delightful years cannot fail to brace you up with the courage necessary to bear the unfortunate years you have to go through; and we can even surmise, with every probability of being right, that the certainty of future happiness will soothe to a considerable extent the misery of the first period.

You have already guessed, I have no doubt, the purpose of this lengthy argument. The sagacious man, believe me, can never be utterly miserable, and I most willingly agree with my friend Horace, who says that, on the contrary, such a man is always happy,

Nisi quum pituita molesta est.

But, pray, where is the man who is always suffering from a rheum?

The fact is that the fearful night I passed in the guard-house of St. Mary resulted for me in a slight loss and a great gain. The small loss was to be away from dear Thérèse, but, being certain of seeing her within ten days, the misfortune was not very great; as to the gain, it was in experience, the true school for a man. I gained a complete system against thoughtlessness, a system of foresight. You may safely bet a hundred to one that a young man who has once lost his purse or his passport will not lose either a second time. Each of those misfortunes has befallen me once only, and I might have been very often the victim of them, if experience had not taught me how much they were to be dreaded. A thoughtless fellow is a man who has not yet found the word "dread" in the dictionary of his life.

The officer who relieved my cross-grained Castilian on the following day seemed of a different nature altogether; his prepossessing countenance pleased me much. He was a Frenchman, and I must say that I have always liked the French and never the Spaniards; there is in the manners of the first something so engaging, so obliging, that you feel attracted towards them as towards a friend; whilst an air of unbecoming haughtiness gives to the second a dark, forbidding countenance which certainly does not prepossess in their favour. Yet I have often been duped by Frenchmen and never by Spaniards—a proof that we ought to mistrust our tastes.

The new officer, approaching me very politely, said to me, "To what chance, reverend sir, am I indebted for the honour of having you in my custody?"

Ah! here was a way of speaking which restored to my lungs all their elasticity! I gave him all the particulars of my misfortune, and he found the mishap very amusing. But a man disposed to laugh at my disappointment could not be disagreeable to me, for it proved that the turn of his mind had more than one point of resemblance with mine. He gave me at once a soldier to serve me, and I had very quickly a bed, a table and a few chairs. He was kind enough to have my bed placed in his own room, and I felt very grateful to him for that delicate attention.

He gave me an invitation to share his dinner and proposed a game of piquet afterwards, but from the very beginning he saw that I was

no match for him; he told me so and warned me that the officer who would relieve him the next day was a better player even than he was himself; I lost three or four ducats. He advised me to abstain from playing on the following day, and I followed his advice. He told me also that he would have company to supper, that there would be a game of faro, but that, the banker being a Greek and a crafty player, I ought not to play. I thought his advice very considerate, particularly when I saw that all the punters lost and that the Greek, very calm in the midst of the insulting treatment of those he had duped, was pocketing his money, after handing a share to the officer who had taken an interest in the bank.

The name of the banker was Don Pepe il Cadetto, and by his accent I knew he was a Neapolitan. I communicated my discovery to the officer, asking him why he had told me that the man was a Greek. He explained to me the meaning of the word Greek applied to a gambler, and the lesson which followed his explanation proved very useful to me in after years.

During the five following days, my life was uniform and rather dull, but on the sixth day the same French officer was on guard, and I was very glad to see him. He told me, with a hearty laugh, that he was delighted to find me still in the guard-house, and I accepted the compliment for what it was worth. In the evening we had the same bank at faro, with the same result as the first time, except a violent blow from the stick of one of the punters upon the back of the banker, of which the Greek stoically feigned to take no notice. I saw the same man again nine years afterwards in Vienna, captain in the Service of Maria Theresa; he then called himself d'Affisso. Ten years later I found him a colonel and some time after worth a million; but the last time I saw him, some thirteen or fourteen years ago, he was a galley slave. He was handsome, but (rather a singular thing) in spite of his beauty, he had a gallows look. I have seen others with the same stamp—Cagliostro, for instance—and another who has not yet been sent to the galleys but who cannot fail to pay them a visit. Should the reader feel any curiosity about it, I can whisper the name in his ear.

Towards the ninth or tenth day everyone in the army knew and liked me, and I was expecting the passport, which could not be delayed much longer. I was almost free and would often walk about even out of sight of the sentinel. They were quite right not to fear my running away, and I should have been wrong if I had thought of escaping, but the most singular adventure of my life happened to me then, and most unexpectedly.

It was about six in the morning. I was taking a walk within one hundred yards of the sentinel when an officer arrived, alighted from his horse, threw the bridle on the neck of his steed and walked off. Admiring the docility of the horse, standing there like a faithful servant to whom his master has given orders to wait for him, I go up to him and without any purpose get hold of the bridle, put my

foot in the stirrup and find myself in the saddle. I was on horseback for the first time in my life. I do not know whether I touched the horse with my cane or with my heels, but suddenly the animal starts at full speed. My right foot having slipped out of the stirrup, I press against the horse with my heels, and, feeling the pressure, it gallops faster and faster, for I did not know how to check it. At the last advanced post the sentinels call out to me to stop; but I cannot obey the order, and, the horse carrying me away faster than ever, I hear the whizzing of a few musket balls, the natural consequence of my involuntary disobedience. At last, when I reach the first advanced picket of the Austrians, the horse is stopped, and I get off his back, thanking God.

An officer of Hussars asks where I am running so fast, and my tongue, quicker than my thought, answers without any privity on my part, that I can render no account but to Prince Lobkowitz, commander-in-chief of the army, whose headquarters were at Rimini. Hearing my answer, the officer gave orders for two Hussars to get on horseback, a fresh mount is given me, and I am taken at full gallop to Rimini, where the officer on guard has me escorted at once to the Prince. I find His Highness alone and tell him candidly what has just happened to me. My story makes him laugh, although he observes that it is hardly credible.

"I ought," he says, "to put you under arrest, but I am willing to save you that unpleasantness." With that he called one of his officers and ordered him to escort me through the Cesena Gate. "Then you can go wherever you please," he added, turning round to me. "But take care not to enter the lines of my army again without a passport or you might fare badly."

I asked him to let me have the horse again, but he answered that the animal did not belong to me. I forgot to ask him to send me back to the place I had come from, and I regretted it; but, after all, perhaps I did for the best.

The officer who accompanied me asked me, as we were passing by a coffee-house, whether I would like to take some chocolate, and we went in. At that moment I saw Petronio going by, and, availing myself of a moment when the officer was talking to someone, I told him not to appear to be acquainted with me but to tell me where he lived. When we had taken our chocolate, the officer paid and we went out. Along the road we kept up the conversation; he told me his name, I gave him mine and explained how I found myself in Rimini. He asked me whether I had not remained some time in Ancona; I answered in the affirmative, and he smiled and said I could get a passport in Bologna, return to Rimini and Pesaro without any fear and recover my trunk by paying the officer for the horse he had lost. We reached the gate, he wished me a pleasant journey, and we parted company.

I found myself free, with gold and jewels but without my trunk. Thérèse was in Rimini, and I could not enter the city. I made up my mind to go to Bologna as quickly as possible in order to get a

passport and return to Pesaro, where I should find my passport from Rome, for I could not make up my mind to lose my trunk and I did not want to be separated from Thérèse until the end of her engagement with the manager of the Rimini Theatre.

It was raining; I had silk stockings on, and I longed for a carriage. I took shelter under the portal of a church and turned my fine overcoat inside out, so as not to look like an abbé. At that moment a peasant happened to come along, and I asked him if a carriage could be had to drive me to Cesena. "I have one, sir," he said, "but I live half a league from here."

"Go and get it. I will wait for you here."

While I was waiting for the return of the peasant with his vehicle, some forty mules laden with provisions came along the road towards Rimini. It was still raining fast, and, the mules passing close by me, I placed my hand mechanically upon the neck of one of them and, following the slow pace of the animals, re-entered Rimini without the slightest notice being taken of me, even by the drivers of the mules. I gave some money to the first street urchin I met, and he took me to Thérèse's house.

With my hair fastened under a night-cap, my hat pulled down over my face and my fine cane concealed under my coat, I did not look a very elegant figure. I inquired for Bellino's mother, and the mistress of the house took me to a room where I found all the family, and Thérèse in a woman's dress. I had reckoned upon surprising them, but Petronio had told them of our meeting, and they were expecting me. I gave a full account of my adventures, but Thérèse, frightened at the danger that threatened me and in spite of her love, told me that it was absolutely necessary for me to go to Bologna, as I had been advised by M. Vais, the officer.

"I know him," she said, "and he is a worthy man, but he comes here every evening, and you must conceal yourself."

It was only eight o'clock in the morning; we had the whole day before us, and everyone promised to be discreet. I allayed Thérèse's anxiety by telling her that I could easily contrive to leave the city without being observed.

Thérèse took me to her own room, where she told me that she had met the manager of the theatre on her arrival in Rimini and that he had taken her at once to the apartments engaged for the family. She had informed him that she was a woman, and that she had made up her mind not to appear as a *castrato* any more; he had expressed himself delighted at such news, because women could appear on the stage at Rimini, which was not under the same legate as Ancona. She added that her engagement would be at an end by the 1st of May, and that she would meet me wherever it would be agreeable to me to wait for her.

"As soon as I can get a passport," I said, "there is nothing to hinder me from remaining near you until the end of your engagement. But,

as M. Vais calls upon you, tell me whether you have informed him of my having spent a few days in Ancona?"

"I did, and I even told him that you had been arrested because you had lost your passport."

I understood why the officer had smiled as he was talking with me. After my conversation with Thérèse, I received the compliments of the mother and of the young sisters, who appeared to me less cheerful and less free than they had been in Ancona. They felt that Bellino, transformed into Thérèse, was too formidable a rival. I listened patiently to all the complaints of the mother, who maintained that, in giving up the character of *castrato*, Thérèse had bidden adieu to fortune, because she might have earned a thousand sequins a year in Rome.

"In Rome, my good woman," I said, "the false Bellino would have been found out, and Thérèse would have been consigned to a miserable convent, for which she was never made."

Notwithstanding the danger of my position, I spent the whole of the day alone with my beloved mistress, and it seemed that every moment gave her fresh beauties and increased my love. At eight o'clock in the evening, hearing someone coming in, she left me, and I remained in the dark, but in such a position that I could see everything and hear every word. The Baron Vais came in, and Thérèse gave him her hand with the grace of a pretty woman and the dignity of a princess. The first thing he told her was the news about me; she appeared to be pleased and listened with well feigned indifference when he said that he had advised me to return with a passport. He spent an hour with her, and I was thoroughly well pleased with her manners and behaviour, which had been such as to leave me no room for the slightest feeling of jealousy. Marina lighted him out, and Thérèse returned to me. We had a joyous supper together, and, as we were getting ready to go to bed, Petronio came in to inform me that ten muleteers would start for Cesena two hours before daybreak and that he was sure I could leave the city with them if I would go and meet them a quarter of an hour before their departure and treat them to something to drink. I was of the same opinion and made up my mind to make the attempt. I asked Petronio to sit up and wake me in good time. It proved an unnecessary precaution, for I was ready before the time and left Thérèse satisfied with my love, without any doubt of my constancy, but rather anxious as to my success in attempting to leave Rimini. She had sixty sequins which she wanted to force back upon me, but I asked her what opinion she would have of me if I accepted them, and we said no more about it.

I went to the stable and, having treated one of the muleteers to some drink, told him that I fain would ride one of his mules as far as Sarignan.

"You are welcome to the ride," said the good fellow, "but I would advise you not to get on the mule till we are outside the city and to pass through the gate on foot, as if you were one of the drivers."

It was exactly what I wanted. Petronio accompanied me as far as the gate, where I gave him a substantial proof of my gratitude. I got out of the city without the slightest difficulty and left the muleteers at Sarignan, whence I posted to Bologna.

I found out that I could not obtain a passport for the simple reason that the authorities of the city persisted that it was not necessary; but I knew better, and it was not for me to tell them why. I resolved to write to the French officer who had treated me so well at the guard-house. I begged him to inquire at the War Office whether my passport had arrived from Rome and, if so, to forward it to me. I also asked him to find out the owner of the horse who had run away with me, offering to pay for it. I made up my mind to wait for Thérèse in Bologna and informed her of my decision, entreating her to write very often. The reader will soon know the new resolution I took on the very same day.

CHAPTER 13

I HAD been careful on my arrival in Bologna to take up my quarters at a small inn so as not to attract any notice. As soon as I had dispatched my letters to Thérèse and the French officer, I thought of purchasing some linen, as it was at least doubtful whether I should ever get my trunk. I deemed it expedient to order some clothes likewise. I was thus ruminating when it suddenly struck me that I was not likely now to succeed in the Church, but, feeling great uncertainty as to the profession I ought to adopt, I took a fancy to transform myself into an officer, as it was evident that I had not to account to anyone for my actions. It was a very natural fancy at my age, for I had just passed through two armies in which I had seen no respect paid to any garb but the military uniform, and I did not see why I should not cause myself to be respected likewise. Besides, I was thinking of returning to Venice and felt great delight at the idea of showing myself there in the garb of honour, for I had been rather ill-treated in that of religion.

I inquired for a good tailor; death was brought to me, for the tailor sent to me was named Morte. I explained to him how I wanted my uniform made, I chose the cloth, he took my measure, and the next day I was transformed into a follower of Mars. I procured a long sword and, with my fine cane in hand, with a well-brushed hat ornamented with a black cockade and wearing a long false pigtail, sallied forth and walked all over the city.

I bethought myself that the importance of my new calling required a better and more showy lodging than the one I had secured on my arrival, and I moved to the best inn. I like even now to recollect the pleasing impression I felt when I was able to admire myself full length in a large mirror. I was highly pleased with my own person! I thought myself made by nature to wear and to honour the military costume, which I had adopted through the most fortunate impulse. Certain that

nobody knew me, I enjoyed by anticipation all the conjectures which people would indulge in respecting me when I made my first appearance in the most fashionable café of the town.

My uniform was white, the vest blue, with a gold and silver shoulder-knot and a sword-knot of the same material. Very well pleased with my grand appearance, I went to the coffee-room and, taking some chocolate, began to read the newspapers, quite at my ease and delighted to see that everybody was puzzled. A bold individual, in the hope of getting me into conversation, came to me and addressed me; I answered him with a monosyllable and observed that everyone was at a loss what to make of me. When I had sufficiently enjoyed public admiration in the coffee-room, I promenaded in the busiest thoroughfares of the city and returned to the inn, where I had dinner by myself.

I had just concluded my repast when my landlord presented himself with the travellers' book, in which he wanted to register my name.

"Casanova."

"Your profession, if you please, sir?"

"Officer."

"In which service?"

"None."

"Your native place?"

"Venice."

"Where do you come from?"

"That is no business of yours."

This answer, which I thought was in keeping with my external appearance, had the desired effect; the landlord bowed himself out, and I felt highly pleased with myself, for I knew that I should enjoy perfect freedom in Bologna, and I was certain that mine host had visited me at the instance of some curious person eager to know who I was.

The next day I called on M. Orsi, the banker, to cash my bill of exchange and took another for six hundred sequins on Venice and one hundred sequins in gold; after which I again exhibited myself in the public places. Two days afterwards, whilst I was taking my coffee after dinner, the banker Orsi was announced. I desired him to be shown in, and he made his appearance, accompanied by Monsignor Cornaro, whom I feigned not to know. M. Orsi remarked that he had called to offer me his services for my letters of exchange and introduced the prelate. I rose and expressed my gratification at making his acquaintance. "But we have met before," he replied, "in Venice and Rome." Assuming an air of blank surprise, I told him he must certainly be mistaken. The prelate, thinking he could guess the reason of my reserve, did not insist and apologised. I offered him a cup of coffee, which he accepted, and, on leaving me, he begged the honour of my company to breakfast the next day.

I made up my mind to persist in my denials and called upon the prelate, who gave me a polite welcome. He was then apostolic pro-

thonotary in Bologna. Breakfast was served, and, as we were sipping our chocolate, he told me that I had most likely some good reasons to warrant my reserve, but that I was wrong not to trust him, the more so as the affair in question did me great honour. "I do not know," said I, "what affair you are alluding to." He then handed me a newspaper, telling me to read a paragraph which he pointed out. My astonishment may be imagined when I read the following correspondence from Pesaro: "M. de Casanova, an officer in the service of the Queen, has deserted after having killed his captain in a duel; the circumstances of the duel are not known; all that has been ascertained is that M. de Casanova has taken the road to Rimini, riding the horse belonging to the captain, who was killed on the spot."

In spite of my surprise and the difficulty I had in keeping my gravity at the reading of the paragraph, in which so much untruth was blended with so little that was real, I managed to keep a serious countenance and told the prelate that the Casanova spoken of in the newspaper must be another man.

"That may be, but you are certainly the Casanova I knew a month ago at Cardinal Acquaviva's and two years ago at the house of my sister, Madame Lovedan, in Venice. Besides, the Ancona banker speaks of you as an ecclesiastic in his letter of advice to M. Orsi."

"Very well, monsignor; Your Excellency compels me to agree to my being the same Casanova, but I entreat you not to ask me any more questions, as I am bound in honour to observe the strictest reserve."

"That is enough for me, and I am satisfied. Let us talk of something else."

I was amused at the false reports which were being circulated about me, and I became from that moment a thorough sceptic on the subject of historical truth. I enjoyed, however, very great pleasure in thinking that my reserve had fed the belief of my being the Casanova mentioned in the newspaper. I felt certain that the prelate would write the whole affair to Venice, where it would do me great honour, at least until the truth should be known, and in that case my reserve would be justified; besides, I should then most likely be far away. I made up my mind to go to Venice as soon as I heard from Thérèse, as I thought that I could wait for her there more comfortably than in Bologna, and in my native place there was nothing to hinder me from marrying her openly. In the meantime the fable from Pesaro amused me a good deal, and I expected every day to see it denied in some newspaper. The real officer Casanova must have laughed at the accusation brought against him of having run away with the horse as much as I laughed at the caprice which had metamorphosed me into an officer in Bologna, just as if I had done it for the very purpose of giving to the affair every appearance of truth.

On the fourth day of my stay in Bologna, I received by express a long letter from Thérèse. She informed me that on the day after my escape from Rimini Baron Vais had presented to her the Duke de Castropignano, who, having heard her sing, had offered her one thou-

sand ounces a year and all travelling expenses paid if she would accept an engagement as prima donna at the San Carlo Theatre in Naples, where she would have to go immediately after her Rimini engagement. She had requested and obtained a week to come to a decision. She enclosed two documents: the first was the written memorandum of the duke's proposals, which she sent in order that I should peruse it, as she did not wish to sign it without my consent; the second was a formal engagement, written by herself, to remain all her life devoted to me and at my service. She added in her letter that, if I wished to accompany her to Naples, she would meet me anywhere I might appoint, but that, if I had any objection to returning to that city, she would immediately refuse the brilliant offer, for her only happiness was to please me in all things.

For the first time in my life I found myself in need of thoughtful consideration before I could make up my mind. Thérèse's letter had entirely upset all my ideas, and, feeling that I could not answer it at once, I told the messenger to call the next day.

Two motives of equal weight kept the balance wavering: self-love and love for Thérèse. I felt that I ought not to require Thérèse to give up such prospects of fortune; but I could not take upon myself either to let her go to Naples without me or to accompany her there. On the one hand, I shuddered at the idea that my love might ruin Thérèse's prospects; on the other, the idea of the blow inflicted on my self-love, on my pride, if I went to Naples with her sickened me.

How could I make up my mind to reappear in that city in the guise of a cowardly fellow living at the expense of his mistress or his wife? What would my cousin Antonio, Don Polo and his dear son, Don Lelio Caraffa, and all the patricians who knew me, have said? The thought of Lucrezia and her husband sent a cold shiver through me. I considered that, in spite of my love for Thérèse, I should become very miserable if everyone despised me. Linked to her destiny as a lover or as a husband, I would be degraded, humbled and a mean sycophant. Then came the thought, is this to be the end of all my hopes? The die was cast, my head had conquered my heart. I fancied that I had hit upon an excellent expedient, which at all events made me gain time, and I resolved to act upon it. I wrote to Thérèse, advising her to accept the engagement for Naples, where she might expect me to join her in the month of July or after my return from Constantinople. I cautioned her to engage an honest-looking waiting-woman so as to appear respectably in the world, and to lead such a life as would permit me to make her my wife on my return without being ashamed of myself. I foresaw that her success would be insured by her beauty even more than by her talent, and, with my nature, I knew that I could never assume the character of an easy-going lover or a compliant husband.

Had I received Thérèse's letter one week sooner, it is certain that she would not have gone to Naples, for my love would then have

proved stronger than my reason; but in matters of love, as in all others, Time is a great teacher.

I told Thérèse to direct her answer to Bologna, and three days after I received from her a letter, loving and at the same time sad, in which she informed me that she had signed the engagement. She had secured the services of a woman whom she could present as her mother; she would reach Naples towards the middle of May and would wait for me there till she heard from me that I no longer wanted her.

Four days after the receipt of that letter, the last but one that Thérèse wrote me, I left Bologna for Venice. Before my departure I had received an answer from the French officer, advising me that my passport had reached Pesaro and that he was ready to forward it to me with my trunk if I would pay M. Marcello Birna, the *provveditore* of the Spanish army, whose address he enclosed, the sum of fifty doubloons for the horse which I had run away with or which had run away with me. I repaired at once to the house of the *provveditore*, well pleased to settle that affair, and received my trunk and my passport a few hours before leaving Bologna. But, as my paying for the horse was known all over the town, Monsignor Cornaro was confirmed in his belief that I had killed my captain in a duel.

To go to Venice, it was necessary to submit to a quarantine, which had been adhered to only because the two governments had fallen out. The Venetians wanted the Pope to be the first in giving free passage through his frontiers, and the Pope insisted that the Venetians should take the initiative. The result of this trifling pique between the two governments was great hindrance to commerce, but very often that which bears only upon the private interest of the people is lightly treated by the rulers. I did not wish to be quarantined and determined on evading it. It was rather a delicate undertaking, for in Venice the sanitary laws are very strict, but in those days I delighted in doing, if not everything that was forbidden, at least everything which offered real difficulties.

I knew that between the state of Mantua and that of Venice the passage was free, and I knew likewise that there was no restriction in the communication between Mantua and Modena; if I could therefore penetrate into the state of Mantua by stating that I was coming from Modena, my success would be certain because I could then cross the Po and go straight to Venice. I got a carrier to drive me to Revere, a city situated on the river Po and belonging to the state of Mantua.

The driver told me that, if he took the cross-roads, he could go to Revere and say that we came from Mantua and that the only difficulty would be in the absence of the sanitary certificate which is delivered in Mantua and which was certain to be asked for in Revere. I suggested that the best way to manage would be for him to say that he had lost it, and a little money removed every objection on his part. When we reached the gates of Revere, I represented myself as a Spanish officer going to Venice to meet the Duke of Modena (whom I knew to be there) on business of the greatest importance. The

sanitary certificate was not even demanded, military honours were duly paid to me, and I was most civilly treated. A certificate was immediately delivered to me, setting forth that I was travelling from Revere, and with it I crossed the Po without any difficulty at Ostiglia, from which place I proceeded to Legnago. There I left my carrier as much pleased with my generosity as with the good luck which had attended our journey and, taking post-horses, reached Venice in the evening. I remarked that it was the 2nd of April, 1744, the anniversary of my birth, which ten times during my life has been marked by some important event.

The very next morning I went to the exchange in order to procure a passage to Constantinople, but I could not find any passenger ship sailing for two or three months, and I engaged a berth in a Venetian ship called *Our Lady of the Rosary*, Commander Zane, which was to sail for Corfu in the course of the month.

Having thus prepared myself to obey my destiny, which, according to my superstitious feeling, called me imperiously to Constantinople, I went to St. Mark's Square in order to see and to be seen, enjoying by anticipation the surprise of my acquaintances at not finding me any longer an abbé. I must not forget to state that at Revere I had decorated my hat with a red cockade.

I thought that my first visit was by right due to the Abbé Grimani. The moment he saw me, he raised a perfect shriek of astonishment, for he thought I was still with Cardinal Acquaviva on the road to a political career, and he saw standing before him a son of Mars. He had just left the dinner-table as I entered, and he had company. I observed amongst the guests an officer wearing the Spanish uniform, but I was not put out of countenance. I told the Abbé Grimani that I was only passing through Venice and that I felt it a duty and a pleasure to pay my respects to him.

"I did not expect to see you in such a costume."

"I have resolved to throw off the garb which could not procure me a fortune likely to satisfy my ambition."

"Where are you going?"

"To Constantinople; and I hope to find a quick passage to Corfu, as I have dispatches from Cardinal Acquaviva."

"Where do you come from now?"

"From the Spanish army, which I left ten days ago."

These words were hardly spoken when I heard the voice of a young nobleman exclaiming, "That is not true."

"The profession to which I belong," I said to him with great animation, "does not permit me to let anyone give me the lie."

And upon that, bowing all round, I went away without taking any notice of those who were calling me back.

I wore a uniform; it seemed to me that I was right in showing that sensitive and haughty pride which forms one of the characteristics of military men. I was no longer a priest; I could not bear being given the lie, especially in so public a manner.

I called upon Madame Manzoni, whom I was longing to see. She was very happy to see me and did not fail to remind me of her prediction. I told her my history, which amused her very much; but she said that, if I went to Constantinople, I should most likely never see her again.

After my visit to Madame Manzoni I went to the house of Madame Orio, where I found worthy M. Rosa, Nanette and Marton. They were all greatly surprised, indeed petrified, at seeing me. The two lovely sisters looked more beautiful than ever, but I did not think it necessary to tell them the history of my nine months' absence, for it would not have edified the aunt or pleased the nieces. I satisfied myself with telling them as much as I thought fit and amused them for three hours. Seeing that the good old lady was carried away by her enthusiasm, I told her that I should be very happy to pass under her roof four or five weeks of my stay in Venice if she could give me a room and supper, but on condition that I should not prove a burden to her or to her charming nieces.

"I should be only too happy," she answered, "to have you so long, but I have no room to offer you."

"Yes, you have one, my dear," exclaimed M. Rosa, "and I undertake to put it to rights within two hours."

It was the room adjoining the chamber of the two sisters. Nanette said immediately that she would come downstairs with her sister, but Madame Orio answered that it was unnecessary, as they could lock themselves in their room.

"There would be no need for them to do that, madame," I said, with a serious and modest air, "and, if I am likely to occasion the slightest disturbance, I can remain at the inn."

"There will be no disturbance whatever; but forgive my nieces, they are young prudes, and have a very high opinion of themselves."

Everything being satisfactorily arranged, I forced upon Madame Orio a payment of fifteen sequins in advance, assuring her that I was rich and that I had made a very good bargain, as I should spend a great deal more if I kept my room at the inn. I added that I would send my luggage and take up my quarters in her house on the following day. During the whole of the conversation I could see the eyes of my two dear little wives sparkling with pleasure, and they reconquered all their influence over my heart, in spite of my love for Thérèse, whose image was, all the same, brilliant in my soul; this was passing infidelity, but not inconstancy.

On the following day I called at the War Office, but, to avoid every chance of unpleasantness, I took care to remove my cockade. I found in the office Major Pelodoro, who could not control his joy when he saw me in a military uniform, and hugged me with delight. As soon as I had explained to him that I wanted to go to Constantinople and that, although in uniform, I was free, he advised me earnestly to seek the favour of going to Turkey with the *bailo*, who intended to leave

within two months, and even to try to obtain service in the Venetian army.

His advice suited me exactly, and the Secretary for War, who had known me the year before, happening to see me, summoned me to him. He told me that he had received letters from Bologna which had informed him of a certain adventure entirely to my honour, adding that he knew that I would not acknowledge it. He then asked me if I had received my discharge before leaving the Spanish army.

"I could not receive my discharge, as I was never in the service."

"And how did you manage to come to Venice without performing quarantine?"

"Persons coming from Mantua are not subject to it."

"True; but I advise you to enter the Venetian service like Major Pelodoro."

As I was leaving the ducal palace, I met the Abbé Grimani, who told me that the abrupt manner in which I had left his house had displeased everybody.

"Even the Spanish officer?"

"No, for he remarked that, if you had truly been with the army, you could not act differently, and he has himself assured me that you were there, and, to prove what he asserted, he had me read an article in the newspaper in which it is stated that you killed your captain in a duel. Of course it is only a fable?"

"How do you know that it is not a fact?"

"Is it true, then?"

"I do not say so, but it may be true, quite as true as my having been with the Spanish army ten days ago."

"But that is impossible unless you have broken through the quarantine."

"I have broken nothing. I crossed the Po openly at Revere, and here I am. I am sorry not to be able to present myself at Your Excellency's palace, but I cannot do so until I have received the most complete satisfaction from the person who gave me the lie. I could put up with an insult when I wore the livery of humility, but I cannot bear one now that I wear the garb of honour."

"You are wrong to take it in such a high tone. The person who attacked your veracity is M. Valmarana, the *provveditore* of the sanitary department, and he contends that, as nobody can pass through the cordon, it would be impossible for you to be here. Satisfaction, indeed! Have you forgotten who you are?"

"No, I know who I am; and I know likewise that, if I was taken for a coward before leaving Venice, now that I have returned, no one shall insult me without repenting it."

"Come and dine with me."

"No, because the Spanish officer would know it."

"He will even see you, for he dines with me every day."

"Very well, then I will go, and I will let him be the judge of my quarrel with M. Valmarana."

I dined that day with Major Pelodoro and several other officers, who agreed in advising me to enter the service of the Republic, and I resolved to do so. "I am acquainted," said the major, "with a young lieutenant whose health is not sufficiently strong to allow him to go to the East and who would be glad to sell his commission, for which he wants one hundred sequins. But it would be necessary to obtain the consent of the Secretary of War." "Mention the matter to him," I replied. "The one hundred sequins are ready." The major undertook the commission.

In the evening I went to Madame Orio and found myself very comfortably lodged. After supper the aunt told her nieces to show me to my room, and, as may well be supposed, we spent a most delightful night. After that they took the agreeable duty by turns, and, in order to avoid any surprise in case the aunt should take it into her head to pay them a visit, we skilfully displaced a part of the partition, which allowed them to come in and out of my room without opening the door. But the good lady believed us three living specimens of virtue and never thought of putting us to the test.

Two or three days afterwards M. Grimani contrived an interview between me and M. Valmarana, who told me that, if he had been aware that the sanitary line could be eluded, he would never have impugned my veracity, and thanked me for the information I had given him. The affair was thus agreeably arranged, and until my departure I honoured M. Grimani's excellent dinner with my presence every day.

Towards the end of the month I entered the service of the Republic in the capacity of ensign in the Bala regiment, then at Corfu; the young man who had left the regiment through the magical virtue of my hundred sequins was lieutenant, but the Secretary of War objected to my having that rank for reasons to which I had to submit if I wished to enter the army; but he promised me that, at the end of the year, I would be promoted to the grade of lieutenant, and he granted me a furlough to go to Constantinople. I accepted, for I was determined to serve in the army.

M. Pierre Vendramin, an illustrious senator, obtained me the favour of a passage to Constantinople with the Chevalier Vénier, who was proceeding to that city in the quality of *baillo*, but, as he would arrive in Corfu a month after me, the chevalier very kindly promised to pick me up as he called at Corfu.

A few days before my departure I received a letter from Thérèse, who informed me that the Duke de Castropignano escorted her everywhere. "The duke is old," she wrote, "but, even if he were young, you would have no cause for uneasiness on my account. Should you ever want any money, draw upon me from any place where you may happen to be, and be quite certain that your letters of exchange will be paid, even if I have to sell everything I possess to honour your signature."

There was to be another passenger on board the ship of the line on which I had engaged my passage, namely, a noble Venetian, who

was going to Zante in the quality of councillor with a numerous and brilliant retinue. The captain of the ship told me that, if I were obliged to take my meals alone, I was not likely to fare very well, and he advised me to obtain an introduction to the nobleman, who would not fail to invite me to share his table. His name was Antonio Dolfin, and he had been nicknamed "Bucentoro," in consequence of his air of grandeur and the elegance of his toilet. Fortunately I did not have to beg an introduction, for M. Grimani offered of his own accord to present me to the magnificent councillor, who received me in the kindest manner and invited me at once to take my meals at his table. He expressed a desire that I should make the acquaintance of his wife, who was to accompany him on the journey. I called upon her the next day and found a lady perfect in manners, but already of a certain age and completely deaf. I had therefore but little pleasure to expect from her conversation. She had a very charming young daughter, whom she left in a convent. She became celebrated afterwards and is still alive, I believe, the widow of Procurator Iron, whose family is extinct.

I have seldom seen a finer-looking man or a man of more imposing appearance than M. Dolfin. He was eminently distinguished for his wit and politeness. He was eloquent, always cheerful when he lost at cards, the favourite of ladies, whom he endeavoured to please in everything, always courageous and of an even temper, whether in good or adverse fortune.

He had ventured on travelling without permission and had entered a foreign service, which had brought him into disgrace with the government, for a noble son of Venice cannot be guilty of a greater crime. For this offence he had been imprisoned in "The Leads"—a favour which destiny was also holding in reserve for me.

Highly gifted, generous, but not wealthy, M. Dolfin had been compelled to solicit from the Grand Council a lucrative governorship and had been appointed to Zante; but he started with such a splendid suite that he was not likely to save much out of his salary. Such a man as I have just portrayed could not make a fortune in Venice, because an aristocratic government cannot obtain a state of lasting, steady peace at home unless equality is maintained amongst the nobility, and equality, either moral or physical, cannot be appreciated in any other way than by appearances. The result is that the man who does not want to lay himself open to persecution and who happens to be superior or inferior to the others must endeavour to conceal it by all possible means. If he is ambitious, he must feign great contempt for dignities; if he seeks employment, he must not appear to want any; if his features are handsome, he must be careless of his physical appearance; he must dress badly, wear nothing in good taste, ridicule every foreign importation, make his bow without grace, be careless in his manner, care nothing for the fine arts, conceal his good breeding, have no foreign cook, wear an uncombed wig and look rather dirty. M. Dolfin was not endowed with any of those eminent qualities and therefore he had no hope of a great fortune in his native country.

The day before my departure from Venice I did not go out; I devoted the whole of the day to friendship. Madame Orio and her lovely nieces shed many tears, and I joined them in that delightful employment. During the last night that I spent with both of them, the sisters repeated over and over in the midst of the raptures of love, that they never would see me again. They guessed rightly; but, if they had happened to see me again, they would have guessed wrongly. Observe how wonderful prophets are! I went on board on the 5th of May, with a good supply of clothing, jewels and ready cash. Our ship carried twenty-four guns and two hundred Sclavonian soldiers. We sailed from Malamocco to the shores of Istria during the night and came to anchor in the harbour of Orsera to take ballast. I landed with several others to take a stroll through the wretched place where I had spent three days and nine months before, a recollection which caused me a pleasant sensation when I compared my present position to what it was at that time. What a difference in everything—health, social condition and money! I felt quite certain that, in the splendid uniform I was now wearing, nobody would recognise the miserable-looking abbé who, but for Friar Stephano, would have become—God knows what!

CHAPTER 14

I AFFIRM that a stupid servant is more dangerous than a bad one, and a much greater plague, for one can be on one's guard against a wicked person, but never against a fool. You can punish wickedness but not stupidity, unless you send away the fool, male or female, who is guilty of it, and, if you do so, you generally find out that the change has only thrown you out of the frying pan into the fire.

This chapter and the two following ones were completed; they gave at full length all the particulars which I must now abridge, for my silly servant has taken the three chapters for her own purposes. She pleaded as an excuse that the sheets of paper were old, written upon, covered with scribbling and erasures, and that she had taken them in preference to nice, clean paper, thinking that I would care much more for the latter than the former. I flew into a violent passion, but I was wrong, for the poor girl had acted with a good intent; her judgment alone had misled her. It is well known that the first result of anger is to deprive the angry man of the faculty of reason, for anger and reason do not belong to the same family. Luckily, passion does not keep me long under its sway: *Irasci celerum tamen et placabilem esse*. After I had wasted my time in hurling at her bitter reproaches, the force of which did not strike her, and in proving to her that she was a stupid fool, she refuted all my arguments by the most complete silence. There was nothing to do but resign myself, and, although not yet in the best of tempers, I went to work. What I am going to write will probably not be so good as what I had composed when I felt in the proper

humour, but my readers must be satisfied with it; they will, like the engineer, gain in time what they lose in strength.

I landed at Orsera while our ship was taking ballast, as a ship cannot sail well when she is too light, and I was walking about when I remarked a man who was looking at me very attentively. As I had no dread of any creditor, I thought that he was interested by my fine appearance; I could not find fault with such a feeling and kept walking on, but, as I passed him, he addressed me:

"Might I presume to inquire whether this is your first visit to Orsera, captain?"

"No, sir, this is my second visit to this city."

"Were you not here last year?"

"I was."

"But you were not in uniform then?"

"True again; but your questions begin to sound rather indiscreet."

"Be good enough to forgive me, sir, for my curiosity is the offspring of gratitude. I am indebted to you for the greatest benefits, and I trust that Providence has brought you here again only to give me the opportunity of making greater still my debt of gratitude to you."

"What on earth have I done, and what can I do, for you? I am at a loss to guess your meaning."

"Will you be so kind as to come and breakfast with me? My house is near at hand; my *refosco* is delicious; please to taste it, and I will convince you in a few words that you are truly my benefactor and that I have a right to expect that you have returned to Orsera to load me with fresh benefactions."

I could not suspect the man of insanity; but, as I could not make him out, I fancied that he wanted to make me purchase some of his *refosco*, and I accepted his invitation. We went up to his room, and he left me for a few moments to order breakfast. I observed several surgical instruments, which made me suppose that he was a surgeon, and I asked him when he returned.

"Yes, captain; I have been practising surgery in this place for twenty years, and in a very poor way, for I had nothing to do, except a few cases of bleeding, of cupping, and occasionally some slight excoriation to dress or a sprained ankle to put to rights. I did not earn even the poorest living. But since last year a great change has taken place; I have made a good deal of money, I have laid it out advantageously, and it is to you, captain, to you (may God bless you!) that I am indebted for my present comforts."

"But how so?"

"In this way, captain. You had a connection with Don Jerome's housekeeper, and you left her, when you went away, a certain souvenir which she communicated to a friend of hers, who, in perfect good faith, made a present of it to his wife. This lady did not wish, I suppose, to be selfish, and she gave the souvenir to a libertine who, in his turn, was so generous with it that, in less than a month, I had about fifty clients. The following months were not less fruitful, and I gave the

benefit of my attendance to everybody—of course, for a consideration. There are a few patients still under my care, but in a short time there will be no more, as the souvenir left by you has now lost all its virtue. You can easily realise now the joy I felt when I saw you; you are a bird of good omen. May I hope that your visit will last long enough to enable you to renew the source of my fortune?"

I laughed heartily, but he was grieved to hear that I was in excellent health. He remarked, however, that I was not likely to be so well off on my return, because, in the country to which I was going, there was abundance of damaged goods, but that no one knew better than he did how to root out the venom left by the use of such bad merchandise. He begged that I would depend upon him, and not trust myself in the hands of quacks, who would be sure to palm off their remedies on me. I promised him everything and, taking leave of him with many thanks, returned to the ship. I related the whole affair to M. Dolfin, who was highly amused. We sailed on the following day, but on the fourth day, on the other side of Curzola, we were visited by a storm which very nearly cost me my life. This is how it happened:

The chaplain of the ship was a Sclavonian priest, very ignorant, insolent and coarse-mannered, and, as I turned him into ridicule whenever the opportunity offered, he had naturally become my sworn enemy. *Tant de fiel entre-t-il dans l'âme d'un dévot!* When the storm was at its height, he posted himself on the quarter-deck and, with book in hand, proceeded to exorcise all the spirits of hell whom he thought he could see in the clouds and to whom he pointed for the benefit of the sailors, who, believing themselves lost, were crying, howling and giving way to despair, instead of attending to the working of the ship, then in great danger on account of the rocks and breakers which surrounded us.

Seeing the peril of our position and the evil effect of his stupid incantations upon the minds of the sailors whom the ignorant priest was throwing into the apathy of despair, instead of keeping up their courage, I thought it prudent to interfere. I went up the rigging, calling upon the sailors to do their duty cheerfully, telling them that there were no devils and that the priest who pretended to see them was a fool. But it was in vain that I spoke in the most forcible manner, in vain that I went to work myself and showed that safety was to be insured only by active means; I could not prevent the priest declaring that I was an atheist, and he managed to rouse against me the anger of the greatest part of the crew. The wind continued to lash the sea into fury for the two following days, and the knave contrived to persuade the sailors who listened to him that the hurricane would not abate as long as I was on board. Imbued with that conviction, one of the men, thinking he had found a good opportunity of fulfilling the wishes of the priest, came up to me as I was standing at the extreme end of the forecastle and pushed me so roughly that I was thrown over. I should have been irretrievably lost, but the sharp point of an anchor, hanging along the side of the ship, caught in my clothes and prevented

me from falling into the sea, proving truly my sheet-anchor. Some men came to my assistance, and I was saved. A corporal then pointed out to me the sailor who had tried to murder me, and, taking a stout stick, I treated the scoundrel to a sound thrashing; but the sailors, headed by the furious priest, rushed towards us when they heard his screams, and I should have been killed if the soldiers had not taken my part. The commander and M. Dolfin then came on deck, but they were compelled to listen to the chaplain and to promise, in order to pacify the vile rabble, that they would land me at the first opportunity. But even this was not enough; the priest demanded that I should give up to him a certain parchment that I had purchased from a Greek at Malamocco just before sailing. I had no recollection of it, but it was true. I laughed and gave it to M. Dolfin; he handed it to the fanatic chaplain, who, exulting in his victory, called for a large pan of live coals from the cook's galley and made an *auto-da-fé* of the document. The unlucky parchment, before it was entirely consumed, kept on writhing on the fire for half an hour, and the priest did not fail to represent those contortions as a miracle, and all the sailors were sure that it was an infernal manuscript given to me by the devil. The virtue claimed for that piece of parchment by the man who had sold it to me was that it insured its lucky possessor the love of all women, but I trust my readers will do me the justice to believe that I had no faith whatever in amorous philtres, talismans or amulets of any kind. I had purchased it only for a joke.

You can find throughout Italy, in Greece and generally in every country the inhabitants of which are yet wrapped up in primitive ignorance, a tribe of Greeks, Jews, astronomers and exorcists, who sell their dupes rags and toys to which they boastingly attach wonderful virtues and properties, amulets which render invulnerable, scraps of cloth which defend from witchcraft, small bags filled with drugs to keep away goblins, and a thousand gewgaws of the same description. These wonderful goods have no marketable value whatever in France, England, Germany, or any other part of the north of Europe, but the inhabitants of those countries indulge in knavish practices of a much worse kind.

The storm abated just as the innocent parchment was writhing on the fire, and the sailors, believing that the spirits of hell had been exorcised, thought no more of getting rid of my person, and after a prosperous voyage of a week we cast anchor at Corfu. As soon as I had found a comfortable lodging, I took my letters to His Eminence the *provveditore generale* and to all the naval commanders to whom I was recommended and, after paying my respects to my colonel and making the acquaintance of the officers of my regiment, I prepared to enjoy myself until the arrival of the Chevalier Vénier, who had promised to take me to Constantinople. He arrived towards the middle of June, but in the meantime I had been playing basset and had lost all my money and sold or pledged all my jewellery.

Such must be the fate awaiting every man who has a taste for gam-

bling, unless he should know how to fix fickle fortune by playing with a real knowledge derived from calculation or from adroitness which defies chance. I think that a cool and prudent player can manage both without exposing himself to censure or deserving to be called a cheat.

During the month that I spent in Corfu, waiting for the arrival of M. Vénier, I did not devote any time to the study, either moral or physical, of the country, for, excepting the days on which I was on duty, I passed my life in the coffee-house, intent upon the game and sinking, as a matter of course, under the adverse fortune which I braved with obstinacy. I never won, and I had not the moral strength to stop till all my means were gone. The only comfort I had, and a sorry one truly, was to hear the banker himself call me—perhaps sarcastically—a fine player every time I lost a large stake. My misery was at its height when new life was infused into me by the booming of the guns fired in honour of the arrival of the *bailo*. He was on board the *Europa*, a frigate of seventy-two guns, and had taken only eight days to sail from Venice to Corfu. The moment he cast anchor, the *bailo* hoisted his flag of captain-general of the Venetian navy, and the *provveditore* hauled down his own colours. The Republic of Venice has not on the sea any authority greater than that of *bailo* to the Porte. The Chevalier Vénier had with him a distinguished and brilliant suite; Count Annibal Gambera and Count Charles Zenobio, both Venetian noblemen of the first class, and the Marquis d'Anchotti of Bressan were accompanying him to Constantinople for their own amusement. The *bailo* remained a week in Corfu, and all the naval authorities entertained him and his suite in turn, so that there was a constant succession of balls and suppers. When I presented myself to His Excellency, he informed me that he had already spoken to the *provveditore*, who had granted me a furlough of six months to enable me to accompany him to Constantinople as his adjutant; and, as soon as the official document for my furlough had been delivered to me, I sent my small stock of worldly goods on board the *Europa*, and we weighed anchor early the next day.

We sailed with a favourable wind, which remained steady and brought us in six days to Cerigo, where we stopped to take in some water. Feeling some curiosity to visit the ancient Cythera, I went on shore with the sailors on duty, but it would have been better for me if I had remained on board, for in Cerigo I made a bad acquaintance. I was accompanied by the captain of marines.

The moment we set foot on shore, two men, very poorly dressed and of unprepossessing appearance, came to us and begged for assistance. I asked them who they were, and one, quicker than the other, answered:

"We are sentenced to live, and perhaps to die, in this island by the despotism of the Council of Ten. There are forty others as unfortunate as ourselves, and we are all born subjects of the Republic.

"The crime of which we have been accused, which is not considered a crime anywhere, is that we were in the habit of living with our mistresses, without being jealous of our friends, when, finding our ladies

handsome, they obtained their favours with our ready consent. As we were not rich, we felt no remorse in availing ourselves of the generosity of our friends in such cases, but it was said that we were carrying on an illicit trade, and we have been sent to this place, where we receive every day ten sous in *moneta lunga*. We are called *mangia-marroni*, and are worse off than galley slaves, for we are dying of ennui, and we are often starving without knowing how to stay our hunger. My name is Don Antonio Pocchini, I am of a noble Paduan family, and my mother belongs to the illustrious family of Campo San Piero."

We gave them some money and went about the island, returning to the ship after we had visited the fortress. I shall have to speak of that Pocchini some fifteen years later.

The wind continued in our favour, and we reached the Dardanelles in eight or ten days; the Turkish barges met us there to carry us to Constantinople. The sight offered by that city at the distance of a league is truly wonderful, and I believe that a more magnificent panorama cannot be found in any part of the world. It was that splendid view which was the cause of the fall of the Roman, and the rise of the Greek Empire. Constantine the Great, arriving at Byzantium by sea, was so much struck with the wonderful beauty of its position that he exclaimed, "Here is the proper seat of the empire of the whole world!" And, in order to secure the fulfilment of his prediction, he left Rome for Byzantium. If he had known the prophecy of Horace—or, rather, if he had believed in it—he would not have been guilty of such folly. The poet had said that the downfall of the Roman Empire would begin only when one of the successors of Augustus bethought him of removing the capital of the Empire to where it had originated. The Troad is not far from Thrace.

We arrived at the Venetian Embassy in Pera towards the middle of July, and, for a wonder, there was no talk of the plague in Constantinople just then. We were all provided with very comfortable lodgings, but the intensity of the heat induced the *bailo* to seek for a little coolness in a country mansion which had been hired by the *bailo* Dona. It was situated at Bouyoucdéré. The very first order laid upon me was never to go out unknown to the *bailo* and without being escorted by a janissary, and this order I obeyed to the letter. In those days the Russians had not tamed the insolence of the Turkish people. I am told that foreigners can now go about as much as they please in perfect security.

The day after our arrival, I took a janissary to accompany me to Osman Pacha, of Caramania, the name assumed by Count de Bonneval ever since he had adopted the turban. I sent in my letter and was immediately shown into an apartment on the ground floor, furnished in the French fashion, where I saw a stout, elderly gentleman, dressed like a Frenchman, who, as I entered the room, rose, came to meet me with a smiling countenance and asked me how he could serve the *protégé* of a cardinal of the Roman Catholic Church, which he could no longer call his mother. I gave him all the particulars of the cir-

cumstances which, in a moment of despair, had induced me to ask the cardinal for letters of introduction for Constantinople, and I added that, the letters once in my possession, my superstitious feelings had made me believe that I was bound to deliver them in person.

"Then, but for this letter," he said, "you never would have come to Constantinople, and you have no need of me?"

"True, but I consider myself fortunate in having thus made the acquaintance of a man who has attracted the attention of the whole of Europe and who still commands that attention."

His Excellency made some remark respecting the happiness of young men who, like me, without care, without any fixed purpose abandon themselves to fortune with that confidence which knows no fear, and, telling me that the cardinal's letter made it desirable that he should do something for me, he promised to introduce me to three or four of his Turkish friends who deserved to be known. He invited me to dine with him every Thursday and undertook to send me a janissary who would protect me from the insults of the rabble and show me everything worth seeing.

The cardinal's letter representing me as a literary man, the pacha observed that I ought to see his library. I followed him through the garden, and we entered a room furnished with grated cupboards; curtains could be seen behind the wire-work; the books were most likely behind the curtains.

Taking a key out of his pocket, he opened one of the cupboards and, instead of folios, I saw long rows of bottles of the finest wines. We both laughed heartily.

"Here are," said the pacha, "my library and my harem. I am old, women would only shorten my life, but good wine will prolong it, or, at least, make it more agreeable."

"I imagine Your Excellency has obtained a dispensation from the mufti?"

"You are mistaken, for the Pope of the Turks is very far from enjoying as great a power as the Christian Pope. He cannot in any case permit what is forbidden by the Koran; but everyone is at liberty to work out his own damnation if he likes. The Turkish devotees pity the libertines, but they do not persecute them; there is no Inquisition in Turkey. Those who do not follow the precepts of religion, say the Turks, will suffer enough in the life to come; there is no need to make them suffer in this life. The only dispensation I have asked and obtained has been respecting circumcision (although it can hardly be called so) because at my age it might have proved dangerous. That ceremony is generally performed, but it is not compulsory."

During the two hours that we spent together, the pacha inquired after several of his friends in Venice and particularly after Marc Antonio Dieto. I told him that his friends were still faithful to their affection for him and did not find fault with his apostasy. He answered that he was a Mahometan as he had been a Christian and that he was not better acquainted with the Koran than he had been with the Gospel.

"I am certain," he added, "that I shall die calmer and much happier than Prince Eugène. I have had to say that God is God and that Mahomet is His prophet. I have said it, and the Turks care very little whether I believe it or not. I wear the turban as the soldier wears the uniform. I was nothing but a military man; I could not have turned my hand to any other profession, and I made up my mind to become lieutenant-general of the Grand Turk only when I found myself entirely at a loss how to earn my living. When I left Venice, the pitcher had gone too often to the well, it was broken at last, and, if the Jews had offered me the command of an army of fifty thousand men, I would have gone and besieged Jerusalem!"

Bonneval was handsome, but too stout. He had received a sabre-cut in the lower part of the abdomen, which compelled him to wear constantly a bandage supported by a silver plate. He had been exiled to Asia, but only for a short time, for, as he told me, the cabals are not so tenacious in Turkey as they are in Europe and particularly at the court of Vienna. As I was taking leave of him, he was kind enough to say that, since his arrival in Turkey, he had never passed two hours as pleasantly as those he had just spent with me and that he would compliment the *bailo* about me.

The *bailo* Dona, who had known him intimately in Venice, desired me to be the bearer of all his friendly compliments for him, and M. Vénier expressed his deep regret at not being able to make his acquaintance.

The second day after my first visit to him being a Thursday, the pacha did not forget to send a janissary according to his promise. It was about eleven in the morning when the janissary called for me; I followed him and this time found Bonneval dressed in the Turkish style. His guests soon arrived, and we sat down to dinner, eight of us, all well disposed to be cheerful and happy. The dinner was entirely French in cooking and service; his steward and his cook were both worthy French renegades.

He had taken care to introduce me to all his guests and at the same time to let me know who they were, but he did not give me an opportunity of speaking before dinner was nearly over. The conversation was entirely kept up in Italian, and I remarked that the Turks did not utter a single word in their own language, even to say the most ordinary thing. Each guest had near him a bottle which might have contained either white wine or hydromel; all I know is that I drank (as well as M. de Bonneval, next to whom I was seated) some excellent white Burgundy.

The guests got me on the subject of Venice and particularly Rome, and the conversation very naturally fell upon religion, but not upon dogmatic questions; the discipline of religion and liturgical questions were alone discussed.

One of the guests, who was addressed as *effendi*, because he had been Secretary for Foreign Affairs, said that the ambassador from Venice to Rome was a friend of his, and he spoke of him in the highest

manner. I told him that I shared his admiration for that ambassador, who had given me a letter of introduction for a Turkish nobleman whom he had represented as an intimate friend. He inquired for the name of the person to whom the letter was addressed, but I could not recollect it and took the letter out of my pocket-book. The *effendi* was delighted when he found that the letter was for himself. He begged leave to read it at once, and, after he had perused it, he kissed the signature and came to embrace me. This scene pleased M. de Bonneval and all his friends. The *effendi*, whose name was Ismail, entreated the pacha to come to dine with him and to bring me; Bonneval accepted and fixed a day.

Notwithstanding all the politeness of the *effendi*, I was particularly interested during our charming dinner in a fine, elderly man of about sixty, whose countenance breathed at the same time the greatest sagacity and the most perfect kindness. Two years afterwards I found again the same features on the handsome face of M. de Bragadin, a Venetian senator of whom I shall speak at length when we come to that period of my life. That elderly gentleman had listened to me with the greatest attention, but without uttering one word. In society a man whose face and general appearance excites your interest stimulates strongly your curiosity if he remains silent. When we left the dining-room I inquired from M. de Bonneval who he was; he answered that he was wealthy, a philosopher, a man of acknowledged merit, of great purity of morals and strongly attached to his religion. He advised me to cultivate his acquaintance if he made any advances to me.

I was pleased with his advice, and when, after a walk under the shady trees of the garden, we returned to a drawing-room furnished in the Turkish fashion, I purposely took my seat near Yusuf Ali. Such was the name of the Turk for whom I felt so much sympathy. He offered me his pipe in a very graceful manner; I refused it politely and took one brought to me by one of M. de Bonneval's servants. Whenever I have been amongst smokers, I have smoked or left the room; otherwise I would have fancied that I was swallowing the smoke of the others, and that idea, which is true and unpleasant, disgusted me. I have never been able to understand how in Germany the ladies, otherwise so polite and delicate, could inhale the suffocating fumes of a crowd of smokers.

Yusuf, pleased to have me near him, at once led the conversation to subjects similar to those which had been discussed at table and particularly to the reasons which had induced me to give up the peaceful profession of the Church and to choose a military life; and, in order to gratify his curiosity without losing his good opinion, I gave him, but with proper caution, some of the particulars of my life, for I wanted him to be satisfied that, if I had at first entered the career of the holy priesthood, it had not been through any vocation of mine. He seemed pleased with my recital, spoke of natural vocations as a Stoic philosopher, and I saw that he was a fatalist; but, as I was careful not

to attack his system openly, he did not dislike my objections, most likely because he thought himself strong enough to overthrow them.

I must have inspired the honest Mussulman with very great esteem, for he thought me worthy of becoming his disciple; it was not likely that he could entertain the idea of becoming himself the disciple of a young man of nineteen, lost, as he thought, in a false religion.

After spending an hour in questioning me and listening to my principles, he said that he believed me fit to know the real truth, because he saw that I was seeking for it, and that I was not certain of having obtained it so far. He invited me to come and spend a whole day with him, naming the days when I would be certain to find him at home, but he advised me to consult the Pacha Osman before accepting his invitation. I told him that the pacha had already mentioned him to me and had spoken very highly of his character; he seemed much pleased. I fixed a day for my visit and left him.

I informed M. de Bonneval of all that had occurred; he was delighted and promised that his janissary would be every day at the Venetian palace, ready to execute my orders.

I received the congratulations of the *bailo* upon the excellent acquaintances I had already made, and M. Vénier advised me not to neglect such friends in a country where weariness of life was more deadly to foreigners than the plague.

On the day appointed I went early to Yusuf's palace, but he was out. His gardener, who had received his instructions, showed me every attention and entertained me very agreeably for two hours in doing the honours of his master's splendid garden, where I found the most beautiful flowers. This gardener was a Neapolitan and had belonged to Yusuf for thirty years. His manners made me suspect that he was well born and well educated, but he told me frankly that he had never been taught even to read, that he was a sailor when he was taken in slavery and that he was so happy in the service of Yusuf that liberty would be a punishment to him. Of course I did not venture to address him any questions about his master, for his reserve might have put my curiosity to the blush.

Yusuf had gone out on horseback; he returned, and after the usual compliments we dined alone in a summer-house, from which we had a fine view of the sea and in which the heat was cooled by a delightful breeze, which blows regularly at the same hour every day from the northwest and is called the *mistral*. We had a good dinner; there was no prepared dish except the *cauroman*, a peculiar delicacy of the Turks. I drank water and hydromel and told Yusuf that I preferred the latter to wine, of which I never took much at that time. "Your hydromel," I said, "is very good, and the Mussulmans who offend against the law by drinking wine do not deserve any indulgence; I believe they drink wine only because it is forbidden." "Many of the true believers," he answered, "think that they can take it as a medicine. The Grand Turk's physician has brought it into vogue as a medicine, and it has been the cause of his fortune, for he has captivated the favour of his master,

who is in reality constantly ill because he is always in a state of intoxication." I told Yusuf that in my country drunkards were scarce and that drunkenness was a vice to be found only amongst the lowest people; he was much astonished. "I cannot understand," he said, "why wine is allowed by all religions when its use deprives man of his reason." "All religions," I answered, "forbid excess in drinking wine, and the crime is only in the abuse." I proved him the truth of what I had said by telling him that opium produced the same results as wine, but more powerfully, and consequently Mahomet ought to have forbidden the use of it. He observed that he had never taken either wine or opium in the course of his life.

After dinner pipes were brought in and we filled them ourselves. I was smoking with pleasure, but, at the same time, was expectorating. Yusuf, who smoked like a Turk—that is to say, without spitting—said:

"The tobacco you are now smoking is of a very fine quality, and you ought to swallow its balsam, which is mixed with the saliva."

"I suppose you are right; smoking cannot be truly enjoyed without the best tobacco."

"That is true to a certain extent, but the enjoyment found in good tobacco is not the principal pleasure because it pleases only our senses; true enjoyment is that which works upon the soul, and is completely independent of the senses."

"I cannot realise pleasures enjoyed by the soul without the instrumentality of the senses."

"Listen to me. When you fill your pipe, do you feel any pleasure?"

"Yes."

"Whence does that pleasure arise if it is not from your soul? Let us go further. Do you not feel pleased when you give up your pipe after having smoked all the tobacco in it, when you see that nothing is left but some ashes?"

"It is true."

"Well, there are two pleasures with which your senses have certainly nothing to do, but I want you to guess the third and the most essential."

"The most essential? It is the perfume."

"No; that is a pleasure of the organ of smelling, a sensual pleasure."

"Then I do not know."

"Listen. The principal pleasure derived from tobacco smoking is the sight of the smoke itself. You must never see it go out of the bowl of your pipe, but only from the corner of your mouth, at regular intervals which must not be too frequent. It is so truly the greatest pleasure connected with the pipe that you cannot find anywhere a blind man who smokes. Try yourself the experiment of smoking a pipe in your room, at night and without a light; you will soon lay the pipe down."

"It is all perfectly true; yet you must forgive me if I give the preference to several pleasures in which my senses are interested over those which afford enjoyment only to my soul."

"Forty years ago I was of the same opinion, and in forty years, if you

succeed in acquiring wisdom, you will think like me. Pleasures which give activity to our senses, my dear son, disturb the repose of our soul—a proof that they do not deserve the name of real enjoyments.”

“But, if I feel them to be real enjoyments, it is enough to prove that they are truly so.”

“Granted; but, if you would take the trouble of analysing them after you have tasted them, you would not find them unalloyed.”

“It may be so, but why should I take a trouble which would only lessen my enjoyment?”

“A time will come when you will feel pleasure in that very trouble.”

“It strikes me, dear father, that you prefer mature age to youth.”

“You may boldly say ‘old age’.”

“You surprise me. Must I believe that your early life was unhappy?”

“Far from it. I was always fortunate in good health and the master of my own passions; but all I saw in my equals was for me a good school in which I have acquired the knowledge of man and learned the real road to happiness. The happiest of men is not the most voluptuous, but the one who knows how to choose the highest standard of voluptuousness, which can be found, I say again, not in the pleasures which excite our senses, but in those which give greater repose to the soul.”

“That is the voluptuousness which you consider ‘unalloyed’?”

“Yes, and such is the sight of a vast prairie all covered with grass. The green colour, so strongly recommended by our divine prophet, strikes my eyes, and at the same moment I feel that my soul is wrapped up in a calm so delightful that I fancy myself nearer the Creator. I enjoy the same peace, the same repose when I am seated on the banks of a river, when I look upon the water so quiet, yet always moving, which flows constantly, yet never disappears from my sight, never loses any of its clearness, in spite of its constant motion. It strikes me as the image of my own existence and of the calm which I require for my life in order to reach, like the water I am gazing upon, the goal which I do not see and which can be found only at the other end of the journey.”

Thus did the Turk reason, and we passed four hours in this sort of conversation. He had buried two wives and had two sons and one daughter. The eldest son, having received his patrimony, had established himself in the city of Salonica, where he was a wealthy merchant; the other was in the seraglio, in the service of the Grand Turk, and his fortune was in the hands of a trustee. His daughter, Zelmi, then fifteen years of age, was to inherit all his remaining property. He had given her all the accomplishments which could minister to the happiness of the man whom Heaven had destined for her husband. We shall hear more of that daughter anon. The mother of the three children had died five years previous to the time of my visit. Yusuf had taken another wife, a native of Scio, young and very beautiful, but he told me himself that he was now too old and could not hope to have any child

by her. Yet he was only sixty years of age. Before I left, he made me promise to spend at least one day every week with him.

At supper, I told the *baili* how pleasantly the day had passed.

"We envy you," they said, "the prospect you have before you of spending agreeably three or four months in this country while, in our quality of ministers, we must pine away with melancholy."

A few days afterwards, M. de Bonneval took me with him to dine at Ismail's house, where I saw Asiatic luxury on a grand scale, but there were a great many guests, and the conversation was held almost entirely in the Turkish language—a circumstance which annoyed me and M. de Bonneval also. Ismail saw it and invited me to breakfast whenever I felt disposed, assuring me that he would have much pleasure in receiving me. I accepted the invitation and went ten or twelve days afterwards. When we reach that period, my readers must kindly accompany me to the breakfast. For the present I must return to Yusuf, who during my second visit displayed a character which inspired me with the greatest esteem and the warmest affection.

We had dined alone as before, and, conversation happening to turn upon the fine arts, I gave my opinion upon one of the precepts in the Koran, by which Mahometans are deprived of the innocent enjoyment of painting and statues. He told me that Mahomet, a very sagacious legislator, had been right in removing all images from the sight of the followers of Islam.

"Recollect, my son, that the nations to which the prophet brought the knowledge of the true God were all idolators. Men are weak; if the disciples of the prophet had continued to see the same objects, they might have fallen back into their former errors."

"No one ever worshipped an image as an image; the deity of which the image is a representation is what is worshipped."

"I may grant that, but God cannot be matter, and it is right to remove from the thoughts of the vulgar the idea of a material divinity. You are the only men, you Christians, who believe you see God."

"It is true, we are sure of it, but observe that faith alone gives us that certainty."

"I know it; but you are idolators, for you see nothing but a material representation, and yet you have a complete certainty that you see God, unless you should tell me that faith disaffirms it."

"God forbid I should tell you such a thing! Faith, on the contrary, affirms our certainty."

"We thank God that we have no need of any such self-delusion, and there is not one philosopher in the world who could prove to me that you require it."

"That would not be the province of philosophy, dear father, but of theology—a very superior science."

"You are now speaking the language of our theologians, who differ from yours only in this: they use their science to make clearer the truths we ought to know, whilst your theologians try to render those truths more obscure."

"Recollect, dear father, that they are mysteries."

"The existence of God is a sufficiently important mystery to prevent men from daring to add anything to it. God can only be simple; any kind of combination would destroy His essence; such is the God announced by our prophet, who must be the same for all men and in all times. Agree with me that we can add nothing to the simplicity of God. We say that God is *one*; that is the image of simplicity. You say that He is *one* and *three* at the same time, and such a definition strikes us as contradictory, absurd and impious."

"It is a mystery."

"Do you mean God or the definition? I am speaking only of the definition, which ought not to be a mystery or absurd. Common sense, my son, must consider as absurd an assertion which is substantially nonsensical. Prove to me that *three* is not a compound, that it cannot be a compound, and I will become a Christian at once."

"My religion tells me to believe without arguing, and I shudder, my dear Yusuf, when I think that, through some specious reasoning, I might be led to renounce the creed of my fathers. I must first be convinced that they lived in error. Tell me whether, respecting my father's memory, I ought to have such a good opinion of myself as to sit in judgment over him with the intention of giving my sentence against him."

My lively remonstrance moved Yusuf deeply, but after a few instants of silence he said to me:

"With such feelings, my son, you are sure to find grace in the eyes of God, and you are, therefore, one of the elect. If you are in error, God alone can convince you of it, for no just man on earth can refute the sentiment you have just given expression to."

We spoke of many other things in a friendly manner and parted in the evening with the often repeated assurance of the warmest affection and the most perfect devotion.

But my mind was full of our conversation, and, as I went on pondering over the matter, I thought that Yusuf might be right in his opinion as to the essence of God, for it seemed evident that the Creator of all beings ought to be perfectly simple; but I thought at the same time how impossible it would be for me, because the Christian religion had made a mistake, to accept the Turkish creed, which might perhaps have a just conception of God, but which caused me to smile when I recollected that the man who had given birth to it had been an arrant impostor. I had not the slightest idea, however, that Yusuf wished to make a convert of me.

The third time I dined with him, religion was again the subject of conversation.

"Do you believe, dear father, that the religion of Mahomet is the only one in which salvation can be secured?"

"No, my dear son, I am not certain of it, and no man can have such a certainty; but I am sure that the Christian religion is not the true one because it cannot be universal."

"Why not?"

"Because there is neither bread nor wine to be found in three-fourths of the world. Observe that the precepts of the Koran can be followed everywhere."

I did not know how to answer, and I would not equivocate.

"If God cannot be matter," I said, "then He must be a spirit?"

"We know what He is not; but we do not know what He is; man cannot affirm that God is a spirit because he can realise the idea only in an abstract manner. God is immaterial; that is the extent of our knowledge, and it can never be greater."

I was reminded of Plato, who had said exactly the same, and most certainly Yusuf had never read Plato.

He added that the existence of God could be useful only to those who did not entertain a doubt of that existence, and that, as a natural consequence, atheists must be the most miserable of men. God has made man in His own image in order that, amongst all the animals created by Him, there should be one that can understand and confess the existence of the Creator. Without man, God would have no witness of His own glory, and man must therefore understand that his first and highest duty is to glorify God by practising justice and trusting to His providence.

"Observe, my son, that God never abandons the man who in the midst of his misfortunes falls down in prayer before Him, and that He often allows the wretch who has no faith in prayer to die miserably."

"Yet we meet with atheists who are fortunate and happy."

"True; but, in spite of their tranquillity, I pity them because they have no hope beyond this life and are on a level with animals. Besides, if they are philosophers, they must linger in dark ignorance, and, if they never think, they have no consolation, no resource when adversity reaches them. God has made man in such a manner that he cannot be happy unless he entertains no doubt of the existence of his Divine Creator; in all stations of life man is naturally prone to believe in that existence, otherwise man would never have admitted one God, Creator of all beings and of all things."

"I should like to know why atheism has existed only in the systems of the learned and never as a national creed."

"Because the poor feel their wants much more than the rich. There are amongst us a great many impious men who deride the true believers because they have faith in the pilgrimage to Mecca. Wretches that they are, they ought to respect the ancient customs which, exciting the devotion of fervent souls, feed religious principles and impart courage under all misfortunes. Without such consolation people would give way to all the excess of despair."

Much pleased with the attention I gave to all he said, Yusuf would thus yield to the inclination he felt to instruct me, and, on my side, feeling myself drawn towards him by the charm which amiable goodness exerts upon all hearts, I would often go and spend the day with

him, even without any previous invitation, and Yusuf's friendship soon became one of my most precious treasures.

One morning I told my janissary to take me to the palace of Ismail Effendi, in order to fulfil my promise to breakfast with him. He gave me the most friendly welcome and after an excellent breakfast invited me to take a walk in his garden. We found there a pretty summer-house, which we entered, and Ismail attempted some liberties which were not at all to my taste and which I resented by rising in a very abrupt manner. Seeing that I was angry, the Turk affected to approve my reserve and said that he had only been joking. I left him after a few minutes, with the intention of not visiting him again, but I was compelled to do so, as I will explain by-and-by.

When I saw M. de Bonneval, I told him what had happened, and he said that, according to Turkish manners, Ismail had intended to give me a great proof of his friendship, but that I need not be afraid of the offence being repeated. He added that politeness required that I should visit him again, and that Ismail was, in spite of his failing, a perfect gentleman, who had at his disposal the most beautiful female slaves in Turkey.

Five or six weeks after the commencement of our intimacy Yusuf asked me one day whether I was married. I answered that I was not; the conversation turned upon several moral questions and at last fell upon chastity, which, in his opinion, could be accounted a virtue only if considered from one point of view, namely, that of total abstinence, but he added that it could not be acceptable to God, because it transgressed against the very first precept He had given to man.

"I would like to know, for instance," he said, "what name can be given to the chastity of your Knights of Malta. They take a vow of chastity, but it does not mean that they will renounce women altogether; they renounce marriage only. Their chastity, and therefore chastity in general, is violated only by marriage, yet I observe that marriage is one of your sacraments. Therefore, those Knights of Malta promise not to give way to lustful incontinence in the only case in which God might forgive it, but they reserve the license of being lustful unlawfully as often as they please and whenever an opportunity may offer itself; and that immoral, illicit license is granted to them to such an extent that they are allowed to acknowledge legally a child which can be born to them only through a double crime! the most revolting part of it all is that these children of crime—who are, of course, perfectly innocent themselves—are called natural children, as if children born in wedlock came into the world in an unnatural manner! In one word, my dear son, the vow of chastity is so much opposed to divine precepts and to human nature that it can be agreeable neither to God nor to society, nor to those who pledge themselves to keep it, and, being in such opposition to every divine and human law, it must be a crime."

He inquired for the second time whether I was married; I replied in the negative and added that I had no idea of ever getting married.

"What!" he exclaimed; "I must then believe that you are not a perfect man or that you intend to work out your own damnation—unless you should tell me that you are a Christian only outwardly."

"I am a man in the very strongest sense of the word and a true Christian. I must even confess that I adore women and that I have not the slightest idea of depriving myself of the most delightful of all pleasures."

"According to your religion, damnation awaits you."

"I feel certain of the contrary because, when we confess our sins, our priests are compelled to give us absolution."

"I know it, but you must agree with me that it is absurd to suppose that God will forgive a crime which you would, perhaps, not commit if you did not think that, after confession, a priest, a man like you, will give you absolution. God forgives only the repenting sinner."

"No doubt of it, and confession supposes repentance; without it absolution has no effect."

"Is onanism a crime amongst you?"

"Yes, even greater than lustful and illegitimate copulation."

"I was aware of it, and it has always caused me great surprise, for the legislator who enacts a law the execution of which is impossible is a fool. A man in good health, if he cannot have a woman, must necessarily have recourse to onanism, whenever imperious nature demands it, and the man who, from fear of polluting his soul, would abstain from it would only draw upon himself a mortal disease."

"We believe exactly the reverse; we think that young people destroy their constitutions and shorten their lives through self-abuse. In several communities they are closely watched and are as much as possible deprived of every opportunity of indulging in that crime."

"Those who watch them are ignorant fools, and those who pay the watchers for such a service are even more stupid because prohibition must excite the wish to break through such a tyrannical law, to set at nought an interdiction so contrary to nature."

"Yet it seems to me that self-abuse in excess must be injurious to health, for it must weaken and enervate."

"Certainly, because excess in everything is prejudicial and pernicious; but all such excess is the result of our severe prohibition. If girls are not interfered with in the matter of self-abuse, I do not see why boys should be."

"Because girls are very far from running the same risk; they do not lose a great deal in the action of self-abuse, and what they lose does not come from the same source whence flows the germinal liquid in men."

"I do not know, but we have some physicians who say that chlorosis in girls is the result of that pleasure indulged in to excess."

After many such conversations, in which he seemed to consider me as endowed with reason and talent, even when I was not of his opinion, Yusuf Ali surprised me greatly one day by the following proposition:

"I have two sons and a daughter. I no longer think of my sons,

because they have received their share of my fortune. As far as my daughter is concerned, she will after my death inherit all my possessions, and I am, besides, in a position while I am alive to promote the fortune of the man who may marry her. Five years ago I took a young wife, but she has not given me any progeny, and I know to a certainty that no offspring will bless our union. My daughter, whose name is Zelmi, is now fifteen; she is handsome, her eyes are black and lovely like her mother's, her hair is of the colour of the raven's wing, her complexion is animated alabaster; she is tall, well made and of a sweet disposition; I have given her an education which would make her worthy of our master the Sultan. She speaks Greek and Italian fluently, she sings delightfully and accompanies herself on the harp; she can draw and embroider and is always contented and cheerful. No living man can boast of having seen her features, and she loves me so dearly that my will is hers. My daughter is a treasure, and I offer her to you if you will consent to go for one year to Adrianople to reside with a relative of mine, who will teach you our religion, our language and our manners. You will return at the end of one year, and, as soon as you become a Mussulman, my daughter shall be your wife. You will find a house ready furnished, slaves of your own and an income which will enable you to live in comfort. I have no more to say at present. I do not wish you to answer me either to-day or to-morrow or on any fixed day. You will give me your decision whenever you feel yourself called upon by your genius to give it, and you need not give me any answer unless you accept my offer, for, should you refuse it, it is not necessary that the subject should be again mentioned. I do not ask you to give full consideration to my proposal, for, now that I have thrown the seed in your soul, it must fructify. Without hurry, without delay, without anxiety, you can but obey the decrees of God and follow the immutable decision of fate. Such as I know you, I believe that you require only the possession of Zelmi to be completely happy and that you will become one of the pillars of the Ottoman Empire."

Saying these words, Yusuf pressed me affectionately in his arms and left me by myself, to avoid any answer I might be inclined to make. I went away in such wonder at all I had just heard that I found myself at the Venetian Embassy without knowing how I had reached it. The *baili* thought me very pensive and asked whether anything was the matter with me, but I did not feel disposed to gratify their curiosity. I found that Yusuf had indeed spoken truly, his proposal was of such importance that it was my duty, not only not to mention it to anyone, but even to abstain from thinking it over until my mind had recovered its calm sufficiently to give me assurance that no external consideration would weigh in the balance and influence my decision. I had to silence all my passions; prejudices, principles already formed, love and even self-interest were to remain in a state of complete inaction.

When I awoke the next morning, I began to think the matter over and soon discovered that, if I wanted to come to a decision, I ought

not to ponder over it, as, the more I considered, the less likely I should be to decide. This was truly a case for the *seque Deum* of the Stoics.

I did not visit Yusuf for four days, and, when I called on him on the fifth day, we talked cheerfully without once mentioning his proposal, although it was very evident that we were both thinking of it. We remained thus for a fortnight, without ever alluding to the matter which engrossed all our thoughts, but our silence was not caused by dissimulation or by any feeling contrary to our mutual esteem and friendship; and one day Yusuf suggested that very likely I had communicated his proposal to some wise friend in order to obtain good advice. I immediately assured him it was not so and that in a matter of so delicate a nature I thought I ought not to ask anybody's advice.

"I have abandoned myself to God, dear Yusuf, and, full of confidence in Him, I feel certain that I shall decide for the best, whether I make up my mind to become your son or believe that I ought to remain what I am now. In the meantime my mind ponders over it day and night, whenever I am quiet and feel myself composed and collected. When I come to a decision, I will impart it to you alone, and from that moment you shall have over me the authority of a father."

At these words the worthy Yusuf, his eyes wet with tears, placed his left hand over my head and the first two fingers of the right hand on my forehead, saying, "Continue to act in that way, my dear son, and be certain that you can never act wrongly."

"But," I said to him, "one thing might happen: Zelmi might not accept me."

"Have no anxiety about that. My daughter loves you; she, as well as my wife and her nurse, sees you every time that we dine together and listens to you with pleasure."

"Does she know that you are thinking of giving her to me as my wife?"

"She knows that I ardently wish you to become a true believer, so as to enable me to link her destiny to yours."

"I am glad that your habits do not permit you to let me see her because she might dazzle me with her beauty, and then passion would soon have too much weight in the scale; I could no longer flatter myself that my decision had been taken in all the unbiased purity of my soul."

Yusuf was highly delighted at hearing me speak in that manner, and I spoke in perfect good faith. The mere idea of seeing Zelmi caused me to shudder. I felt that, if I had been in love with her, I would have become a Mussulman in order to possess her and that I might soon have repented such a step, for the religion of Mahomet presented to my eyes and to my mind nothing but a disagreeable picture, as well for this life as a future one. As for wealth, I did not think it worth the immense sacrifice demanded from me. I could find equal wealth in Europe without stamping my forehead with the shameful brand of apostasy. I cared deeply for the esteem of the persons of distinction

who knew me and did not want to render myself unworthy of it. Besides, I felt an immense desire to obtain fame amongst civilised and polite nations either in the fine arts or in literature or in any other honourable profession, and I could not reconcile myself to the idea of abandoning to my equals the triumph which I might win if I lived amongst them. It seemed to me, and I am still of the same opinion, that the decision to wear the turban befits only a Christian despairing of himself and at the end of his wits, and fortunately I was not in that predicament. My greatest objection was to spending a year in Adrianople to learn a language for which I did not feel any liking and which I should therefore have learned but imperfectly. How could I, at my age, renounce the prerogative, so pleasant to my vanity, of being reputed a fine talker? And I had secured that reputation wherever I was known. Then I would often think that Zelmi, the eighth wonder of creation in the eyes of her father, might not appear such in my eyes, and it would have been enough to make me miserable, for Yusuf was likely to live twenty years longer and I felt that gratitude, as well as respect, would never have permitted me to give that excellent man any cause for unhappiness by ceasing to show myself a devoted and faithful husband to his daughter. Such were my thoughts, and, as Yusuf could not guess them, it was useless to make a confidant of him.

A few days afterwards I dined with the Pacha Osman and met my Ismail Effendi. He was very friendly to me, and I reciprocated his attentions, though I paid no attention to the reproaches he addressed to me for not having come to breakfast with him for such a long time. I could not refuse to dine at his house with Bonneval, and he treated me to a very pleasing sight: Neapolitan slaves, men and women, performed a pantomime and some Calabrian dances. M. De Bonneval happened to mention the dance called *forlana*, and, Ismail expressing a great wish to know it, I told him that I could give him that pleasure if I had a Venetian woman to dance it with and a fiddler who knew the tune. I took a violin and played the *forlana*, but, even if the partner had been found, I could not play and dance at the same time. Ismail whispered a few words to one of his eunuchs, who went out of the room and returned soon with some message that he delivered to him. The *effendi* told me that he had found the partner I wanted, and I answered that the musician could be had easily if he would send a note to the Venetian Embassy, which was done at once. The *bailo* Dona sent one of his men who played the violin well enough for dancing purposes. As soon as the musician was ready, a door was thrown open, and a fine-looking woman came in, her face covered with a black velvet mask, such as we call *moretta* in Venice. The appearance of that beautiful masked woman surprised and delighted every one of the guests, for it was impossible to imagine a more interesting object, not only on account of the beauty of that part of the face which the mask left exposed, but also for the elegance of her shape, the perfection of her figure and the exquisite taste displayed in her

costume. The nymph took her place, I did the same, and we danced the *forlana* six times without stopping.

I was in perspiration and out of breath, for the *forlana* is the most violent of our national dances; but my beautiful partner stood near me without betraying the slightest fatigue and seemed to challenge me to a new performance. At the round of the dance, which is the most difficult step, she seemed to have wings. I was astounded, for I had never seen anyone, even in Venice, dance the *forlana* so splendidly. After a few minutes' rest, rather ashamed of my feeling tired, I went up to her and said, *Ancora sei, e poi basta, se non volete vedermi a morire*. She would have answered me if she had been able, but she wore one of those cruel masks which forbid speech. But a pressure of her hand, which nobody would see, allowed me to guess all I wanted to know. The moment we finished dancing, the eunuch opened the door, and my lovely partner disappeared.

Ismail could not thank me enough, but it was I who owed him my thanks, for it was the only real pleasure which I enjoyed in Constantinople. I asked him whether the lady was from Venice, but he only answered with a significant smile.

"The worthy Ismail," said M. de Bonneval to me, as we were leaving the house late in the evening, "has been to-day the dupe of his vanity, and I have no doubt that he is sorry already for what he has done. To bring out his beautiful slave to dance with you! According to the prejudices of this country, it is injurious to his dignity, for you are sure to have kindled an amorous flame in the poor girl's breast. I would advise you to be careful and to keep on your guard, because she will try to get up some intrigue with you; but be prudent, for intrigues are always dangerous in Turkey."

I promised to be prudent, but I did not keep my promise; for three or four days afterwards an old slave woman met me in the street and offered to sell for one piaster a tobacco-bag embroidered in gold, and, as she put it in my hand, she contrived to make me feel that there was a letter in the bag.

I observed that she tried to avoid the eyes of the janissary who was walking behind me; I gave her one piaster, she left me, and I proceeded towards Yusuf's house. He was not at home, and I went to his garden to read the letter with perfect freedom. It was sealed and without any address, and the slave might have made a mistake; but my curiosity was excited to the highest pitch; I broke the seal and found the following note written in good enough Italian:

"Should you wish to see the person with whom you danced the *forlana*, take a walk towards evening in the garden beyond the fountain and contrive to become acquainted with the old servant of the gardener by asking her for some lemonade. You may perchance manage to see your partner in the *forlana* without running any risk, even if you should happen to meet Ismail; she is a native of Venice. Be careful not to mention this invitation to any human being."

"I am not such a fool, my lovely countrywoman," I exclaimed, as if

she had been present, and put the letter in my pocket. But at the very moment a fine-looking elderly woman came out of a thicket, pronounced my name and inquired what I wanted and how I had seen her. I answered that I had been speaking to the wind, not supposing that anyone could hear me, and without any more preparation she abruptly told me that she was very glad of the opportunity of speaking with me, that she was from Rome, that she had brought up Zelmi and had taught her to sing and to play the harp. She then praised highly the beauty and the excellent qualities of her pupil, saying that, if I saw her, I would certainly fall in love with her, and expressing how much she regretted that the law should not allow it.

"She sees us at this very moment," she added, "from behind that green window-blind, and we love you ever since Yusuf had informed us that you may, perhaps, become Zelmi's husband."

"May I mention our conversation to Yusuf?" I inquired.

"No."

Her answering me in the negative made me understand that, if I had pressed her a little, she would have allowed me to see her lovely pupil, and perhaps it was with that intention that she had contrived to speak to me, but I felt great reluctance to do anything to displease my worthy host. I had another reason of even greater importance: I was afraid of entering an intricate maze in which the sight of a turban hovering over me made me shudder.

Yusuf came home and, far from being angry when he saw me with the woman, remarked that I must have found much pleasure in conversing with a native of Rome, and he congratulated me upon the delight I must have felt in dancing with one of the beauties from the harem of the voluptuous Ismail.

"Then it must be a pleasure seldom enjoyed if it is so much talked of?"

"Very seldom indeed, for there is amongst us an invincible prejudice against exposing our lovely women to the eyes of other men; but everyone may do as he pleases in his own house; Ismail is a very worthy and a very intelligent man."

"Is the lady with whom I danced known?"

"I believe not. She wore a mask, and everybody knows that Ismail possesses half a dozen slaves of surprising beauty."

I spent a pleasant day with Yusuf, and, when I left him, I ordered his janissary to take me to Ismail's. As I was known by his servants, they allowed me to go in, and I proceeded to the spot described in the letter. The eunuch came to me and informed me that his master was out, but that he would be delighted to hear of my having taken a walk in the garden. I told him that I would like a glass of lemonade, and he took me to the summer-house, where I recognised the old woman who had sold me the tobacco-pouch. The eunuch told her to give me a glass of some liquid, which I found delicious, and would not allow me to give her any money. We then walked towards the fountain, but he told me abruptly that we were to go back, as he saw

three ladies, to whom he pointed, adding that for the sake of decency it was necessary to avoid them. I thanked him for his attentions, left my compliments for Ismail and went away not dissatisfied with my first attempt, and with the hope of being more fortunate another time.

The next morning I received a letter from Ismail, inviting me to go fishing with him on the following day and stating that he intended to enjoy the sport by moonlight. I immediately gave way to my suppositions and went so far as to fancy that Ismail might be capable of arranging an interview between me and the lovely Venetian. I did not mind his being present. I begged permission of Chevalier Vénier to stop out of the palace for one night, but he granted it with the greatest difficulty, because he was afraid of some love affair and of the results it might have. I took care to calm his anxiety as much as I could, but without acquainting him with all the circumstances of the case, for I thought I was wise in being discreet.

I was exact to the appointed time, and Ismail received me with the utmost cordiality, but I was surprised when I found myself alone with him in the boat. We had two rowers and a man to steer; we took some fish fried in oil and ate it in the summer-house. The moon shone brightly, and the night was delightful. Alone with Ismail and knowing his unnatural tastes, I did not feel very comfortable, for, in spite of what M. de Bonneval had told me, I was afraid lest the Turk should take a fancy to give me too great a proof of his friendship, and I did not relish our *tête-à-tête*. But my fears were groundless.

"Let us leave this place quietly," said Ismail. "I have just heard a slight noise which heralds something that will amuse us."

He dismissed his attendants and took my hand, saying:

"Let us go to a small room, the key of which I luckily have with me, but let us be careful not to make any noise. That room has a window overlooking the fountain where I think that two or three of my beauties have just gone to bathe. We will see them and enjoy a very pleasing sight, for they do not imagine that anyone is looking at them. They know that the place is forbidden to everybody except me."

We entered the room, went to the window and, the moon shining right over the basin of the fountain, saw three nymphs who, now swimming, now standing or sitting on the marble steps, offered themselves to our eyes in every possible position and in all the attitudes of graceful voluptuousness. Dear reader, I must not paint in too vivid colours the details of that beautiful picture, but, if nature has endowed you with an ardent imagination and with equally ardent senses, you will easily imagine the fearful havoc which that unique, wonderful and enchanting sight must have made upon my poor body.

A few days after that delightful fishing and bathing party by moonlight, I called upon Yusuf early in the morning; as it was raining, I could not go to the garden, and I went into the dining-room, in which I had never seen anyone. The moment I entered the room, a charming female form rose, covering her features with a thick veil which fell

to the feet. A slave was sitting near the window, doing some tambour-work, but she did not move. I apologised and turned to leave the room, but the lady stopped me, observing, with a sweet voice, that Yusuf had commanded her to entertain me before going out. She invited me to be seated, pointing to a rich cushion placed upon two larger ones, and I obeyed, while, crossing her legs, she sat down upon another cushion opposite to me. I thought I was looking upon Zelmi and fancied that Yusuf had made up his mind to show me that he was not less courageous than Ismail. Yet I was surprised, for by such a proceeding he strongly contradicted his maxims and ran the risk of impairing the unbiased purity of my consent by throwing love into the balance. But I had no fear of that because, to become enamoured, I should have required to see her face.

"I suppose," said the veiled beauty, "that you do not know who I am?"

"I could not guess if I tried."

"I have been for the last five years the wife of your friend, and I am a native of Scio. I was thirteen years of age when I became his wife."

I was greatly astonished to find that my Mussulman philosopher had gone so far as to allow me to converse with his wife, but I felt more at ease after I had received that information and fancied that I might carry the adventure further, but it would be necessary to see the lady's face, for a finely-dressed body, the head of which is not seen, excites but feeble desires. The fire lighted by amorous desires is like a fire of straw; the moment it burns up, it is near its end. I had before me a magnificent appearance, but I could not see the soul of the image, for thick gauze concealed it from my hungry gaze. I could see arms as white as alabaster and hands like those of Alcina, *dove ne nodo apparisce ne vena eccede*, and my active imagination fancied that all the rest was in harmony with those beautiful specimens, for the graceful folds of the muslin, leaving the outline all its perfection, hid from me only the living satin of the surface; there was no doubt that everything was lovely, but I wanted to see in the expression of her eyes that all that my imagination created had life and was endowed with feeling. The Oriental costume is a beautiful varnish placed upon a porcelain vase to protect from the touch the colours of the flowers and of the design, without lessening the pleasure of the eyes. Yusuf's wife was not dressed like a sultana; she wore the costume of Scio, with a short skirt which concealed neither the perfection of the leg nor the round form of the thigh nor the voluptuous plump fall of the hips nor the slender, well made waist, encompassed in a splendid band embroidered in silver and covered with arabesques. Above all those beauties I could see the shape of two globes which Apelles would have taken for the model of those of his lovely Venus and the rapid, unequal movement of which proved to me that those ravishing hillocks were animated. The small valley left between them, and which my eyes greedily feasted upon, seemed to me a lake of nectar, in which

my burning lips longed to quench their thirst with more ardour than they would have drunk from the cup of the gods.

Enraptured, unable to control myself, I thrust my arm forward by a movement almost independent of my will, and my hand, too audacious, was on the point of lifting the hateful veil, but she prevented me by raising herself quickly on tiptoe, upbraiding me at the same time for my perfidious boldness with a voice as commanding as her attitude.

"Dost thou deserve," she said, "Yusuf's friendship when thou abusest the sacred laws of hospitality by insulting his wife?"

"Madame, you must kindly forgive me, for I never had any intention to insult you. In my country the lowest of men may fix his eyes upon the face of a queen."

"Yes, but he cannot tear off her veil if she chooses to wear it. Yusuf shall avenge me."

The threat and the tone in which it was pronounced frightened me. I threw myself at her feet and succeeded in calming her anger.

"Take a seat," she said.

And she sat down herself, crossing her legs with so much freedom that I caught a glimpse of charms which would have caused me to lose all control over myself if the delightful sight had remained one moment longer exposed to my eyes. I then saw that I had gone the wrong way to work, and I felt vexed with myself; but it was too late.

"Art thou excited?" she said.

"How could I be otherwise," I answered, "when thou art scorching me with an ardent fire?"

I had become more prudent and seized her hand without thinking any more of her face.

"Here is my husband," she said, and Yusuf came into the room. We rose, Yusuf embraced me, I complimented him, the slave left the room. Yusuf thanked his wife for having entertained me and offered her his arm to take her to her own apartment. She took it, but, when she reached the door, she raised her veil and, kissing her husband, allowed me to see her lovely face as if it had been done unwittingly. I followed her with my eyes as long as I could, and Yusuf, coming back to me, said with a laugh that his wife had offered to dine with us.

"I thought," I said to him, "that I had Zelmi before me."

"That would have been too much against our established rules. What I have done is not much, but I do not know an honourable man who would be bold enough to bring his daughter into the presence of a stranger."

"I think your wife must be handsome. Is she more beautiful than Zelmi?"

"My daughter's beauty is cheerful, sweet and gentle; that of Sophia is proud and haughty. She will be happy after my death. The man who will marry her will find her a virgin."

I gave an account of my adventure to M. de Bonneval, somewhat

exaggerating the danger I had run in trying to raise the veil of the handsome daughter of Scio.

"She was laughing at you," said the count, "and you ran no danger. She felt very sorry, believe me, to have to deal with a novice like you. You have been playing the comedy in the French fashion when you ought to have gone straight to the point. What on earth did you want to see her nose for? She knew very well that she would have gained nothing by allowing you to see her. You ought to have secured the essential point. If I were young I would perhaps manage to give her a revenge and punish my friend Yusuf. You have given that lovely woman a poor opinion of Italian valour. The most reserved of Turkish women has no modesty except on her face, and, with her veil over it, she knows to a certainty that she will not blush at anything. I am certain that your beauty keeps her face covered whenever our friend Yusuf wishes to joke with her."

"She is yet a virgin."

"Rather a difficult thing to admit, my good friend; but I know the daughters of Scio; they have a talent for counterfeiting virginity."

Yusuf never paid me a similar compliment again, and he was quite right.

A few days after I happened to be in the shop of an Armenian merchant, looking at some beautiful goods, when Yusuf entered the shop and praised my taste; but, although I had admired a great many things, I did not buy because I thought they were too dear. I said so to Yusuf, but he remarked that they were, on the contrary, very cheap, and he purchased them all. We parted company at the door, and the next morning I received all the beautiful things he had bought; it was a delicate attention of my friend, and, to prevent my refusal of such a splendid present, he had enclosed a note stating that on my arrival in Corfu he would let me know to whom the goods were to be delivered. He had thus sent me gold and silver filigrees from Damascus, portfolios, scarves, belts, handkerchiefs and pipes, the whole worth four or five hundred piasters. When I called to thank him, I compelled him to confess that it was a present offered by his friendship.

The day before my departure from Constantinople the excellent man burst into tears as I bade him adieu, and my grief was as great as his own. He told me that, by not accepting the offer of his daughter's hand, I had so strongly captivated his esteem that his feelings for me could not have been warmer if I had become his son. When I went on board ship with the *bailo* Jean Dona, I found another case given to me by him, containing two quintals of the best Mocha coffee, one hundred pounds of tobacco leaves, two large flagons filled, one with Zabandi tobacco, the other with camussa, and a magnificent pipe-tube of jessamine wood, covered with gold filigrane, which I sold in Corfu for one hundred sequins. I had not it in my power to give my generous Turk any mark of my gratitude until I reached Corfu, but there I did not fail to do so. I sold all his beautiful presents, which made me the possessor of a small fortune.

Ismail gave me a letter for the Chevalir de Lezze, but I could not forward it to him because I unfortunately lost it; he presented me with a barrel of hydromel, which I turned likewise into money. M. de Bonneval gave me a letter for Cardinal Acquaviva, which I sent to Rome with an account of my journey, but His Eminence did not think fit to acknowledge the receipt of either. Bonneval made me a present of twelve bottles of malmsey from Ragusa and twelve bottles of genuine *scopolo*—a great rarity, with which I made a present in Corfu which proved very useful to me, as the reader will discover.

The only foreign minister I saw much in Constantinople was the Lord Marshal of Scotland, the celebrated Keith, who represented the King of Prussia and who six years later was of great service to me in Paris.

We sailed from Constantinople in the beginning of September in the same man-of-war which had brought us, and we reached Corfu in fourteen days. The *bailo* Dona did not land. He had with him eight splendid Turkish horses; I saw two of them still alive in Gorizia in the year 1773.

As soon as I had landed with my luggage and had engaged a rather mean lodging, I presented myself to M. André Dolfin, the *provveditore generale*, who promised me again that I should soon be promoted to a lieutenancy. After my visit to him I called upon M. Camporese, my captain, and was well received by him. My third visit was to the commander of galleasses M. D— R—, to whom M. Antonio Dolfin, with whom I had travelled from Venice to Corfu, had kindly recommended me. After a short conversation he asked me if I would remain with him with the title of adjutant. I did not hesitate one instant, but accepted, saying how deeply honoured I felt by his offer and assuring him that he would always find me ready to carry out his orders. He immediately had me taken to my room, and the next day I found myself established in his house. I obtained from my captain a French soldier to serve me and was well pleased when I found that the man was a hair-dresser by trade and a great talker by nature, for he could take care of my beautiful head of hair and I wanted to practise French conversation. He was a good-for-nothing fellow, a drunkard and a debauchee, a peasant from Picardy, and could hardly read or write, but I did not mind all that; all I wanted from him was to serve me and talk to me, and his French was pretty good. He was an amusing rogue, knowing by heart a quantity of erotic songs and smutty stories, which he could tell in the most laughable manner.

When I had sold my stock of goods from Constantinople (except the wines), I found myself the owner of nearly five hundred sequins. I redeemed all the articles which I had pledged in the hands of Jews and turned into money everything of which I had no need. I was determined not to play any longer as a dupe, but to secure in gambling all the advantages which a prudent young man could obtain without sullyng his honour.

I must now make my readers acquainted with the sort of life we

were at that time leading in Corfu. As to the city itself, I will not describe it because there are already many descriptions better than the one I could offer in these pages.

We had then in Corfu the *provveditore generale*, who had sovereign authority and lived in a style of great magnificence. That post was then filled by M. André Dolfin, a man sixty years of age, strict, headstrong and ignorant. He no longer cared for women, but liked to be courted by them. He received every evening, and the supper-table was always laid for twenty-four persons.

We had three field officers of the marines who did duty on the galleys and three field officers for the troops of the line on board the men-of-war. Each galleass had a captain called *sopracomito*, and we had ten of those captains; we had likewise ten commanders, one for each man-of-war, including three *capi di mare*, or admirals. They all belonged to the nobility of Venice. Ten young Venetian noblemen, from twenty to twenty-two years of age, were at Corfu as midshipmen in the navy. We had, besides, about a dozen civil clerks in the police of the island, or in the administration of justice, entitled *grandi ufficiali di terra*. Those who were blessed with handsome wives had the pleasure of seeing their houses very much frequented by admirers who aspired to win the favours of the ladies, but there was not much heroic love-making, perhaps for the reason that there were then in Corfu many Aspasia's whose favours could be had for money. Gambling was allowed everywhere, and that all-absorbing passion was very prejudicial to the emotions of the heart.

The lady who was then most eminent for beauty and gallantry was Madame F—. Her husband, captain of a galley, had come to Corfu with her the year before, and madame had greatly astonished all the naval officers. Thinking that she had the privilege of the choice, she had given the preference to M. D— R— and had dismissed all the suitors who presented themselves. M. F— had married her on the very day she had left the convent; she was only seventeen years of age then, and he had brought her on board his galley immediately after the marriage ceremony.

I saw her for the first time at the dinner-table on the very day of my installation at M. D— R—'s, and she made a great impression upon me. I thought I was gazing at a supernatural being, so infinitely above all the women I had ever seen that it seemed impossible to fall in love with her. She appeared to me of a nature different and so greatly superior to mine that I did not see the possibility of rising up to her. I even went so far as to persuade myself that nothing but a platonic friendship could exist between her and M. D— R—, and that M. F— was quite right not to show any jealousy. Yet that M. F— was a perfect fool and certainly not worthy of such a woman.

The impression made upon me by Madame F— was too ridiculous to last long, and the nature of it soon changed, but in a novel manner, at least as far as I was concerned.

My position as adjutant procured me the honour of dining at

M. D— R—'s table, but nothing more. The other adjutant, like me an ensign in the army, but the greatest fool I had ever seen, shared that honour with me. We were not, however, considered as guests, for nobody ever spoke to us, and, what is more, no one ever honoured us with a look. It used to put me in a rage. I knew very well that people acted in that manner through no real contempt for us, but it went very hard with me. I could very well understand that my colleague, Sanzonio, should not complain of such treatment because he was a blockhead, but I did not feel disposed to allow myself to be put on a par with him. At the end of eight or ten days Madame F—, not having condescended to cast one glance upon my person, began to appear disagreeable to me. I felt piqued, vexed, provoked, and the more so because I could not suppose that the lady acted in that manner wilfully and purposely; I would have been highly pleased if there had been premeditation on her part. I felt satisfied that I was a nobody in her estimation, and, as I was conscious of being somebody, I wanted her to know it. At last a circumstance offered itself in which, thinking that she could address me, she was compelled to look at me.

M. D— R— having observed that a very fine turkey had been placed before me, told me to carve it, and I immediately went to work. I was not a skilful carver, and Madame F—, laughing at my want of dexterity, told me that, if I had not been certain of performing my task with credit to myself, I ought not to have undertaken it. Full of confusion and unable to answer her as my anger prompted, I sat down, with my heart overflowing with spite and hatred against her. To crown my rage, having one day to address me, she asked me what was my name. She had seen me every day for a fortnight, ever since I had been the adjutant of M. D— R—, therefore she ought to have known my name. Besides, I had been very lucky at the gaming-table and had become rather famous in Corfu. My anger against Madame F— was at its height.

I had placed my money in the hands of a certain Maroli, a major in the army and a gamester by profession, who held the faro bank at the coffee-house. We were partners; I helped him when he dealt, and he rendered me the same office when I held the cards, which was often the case because he was not generally liked. He used to hold the cards in a way which frightened the punters; my manners were very different, and I was very lucky. Besides I was easy and smiling when my bank was losing, and I won without showing any avidity, and that is a manner which always pleases the punters.

This Maroli was the man who had won all my money during my first stay in Corfu, and finding when I returned that I was resolved not to be duped any more, he judged me worthy of sharing the wise maxims without which gambling must necessarily ruin all those who meddle with it. But, as Maroli had won my confidence only to a very slight extent, I was very careful. We made up our accounts every

night, as soon as playing was over; the cashier kept the capital of the bank, the winnings were divided, and each took his share away.

Lucky at play, enjoying good health and the friendship of my comrades, who, whenever the opportunity offered, always found me generous and ready to serve them, I would have been well pleased with my position if I had been a little more considered at the table of M. D— R— and treated with less haughtiness by his lady, who without any reason seemed disposed to humiliate me. My self-love was deeply hurt, I hated her, and, with such a disposition of mind, the more I admired the perfection of her charms, the more I found her deficient in wit and intelligence. She might have made the conquest of my heart without bestowing hers upon me, for all I wanted was not to be compelled to hate her, and I could not understand what pleasure it could be for her to be detested, while with only a little kindness she could have been adored. I could not ascribe her manner to a spirit of coquetry, for I had never given her the slightest proof of the opinion I entertained of her beauty and I could not therefore attribute her behaviour to a passion which might have rendered me disagreeable in her eyes; M. D— R— seemed to interest her only in a very slight manner, and, as to her husband, she cared nothing for him. In short, that charming woman made me very unhappy, and I was angry with myself because I felt that, if it had not been for the manner in which she treated me, I would not have thought of her, and my vexation was increased by the feeling of hatred entertained by my heart against her, a feeling which until then I had never known to exist in me and the discovery of which overwhelmed me with confusion.

One day a gentleman handed me, as we were leaving the dinner-table, a roll of gold that he had lost upon trust; Madame F— saw it and said to me abruptly, "What do you do with your money?"

"I keep it, madame, as a provision against possible losses."

"But, as you do not indulge in any expense, it would be better for you not to play; it is time wasted."

"Time given to pleasure is never time lost, madame; the only time which a young man wastes is that which is consumed in weariness because, when he is a prey to ennui, he is likely to fall a prey to love and be despised by the object of his affection."

"Very likely; but you amuse yourself with hoarding up your money and show yourself to be a miser, and a miser is not less contemptible than a man in love. Why do you not buy yourself a pair of gloves?"

You may be sure that at these words the laughter was all on her side, and my vexation was all the greater because I could not deny that she was quite right. It was the adjutant's business to give the ladies an arm to their carriages, and it was not proper to fulfil that duty without gloves. I felt mortified, and the reproach of avarice hurt me deeply. I would a thousand times rather that she had laid my error to a want of education; and yet, so full of contradictions is the human heart, instead of making amends by adopting an appearance of elegance which the state of my finances enabled me to keep up, I did not purchase

any gloves and resolved to avoid her and abandon her to the insipid and dull gallantry of Sanzonio, who sported gloves, but whose teeth were rotten, whose breath was putrid, who wore a wig and whose face seemed to be covered with shrivelled yellow parchment.

I spent my days in a continual state of rage and spite, and the most absurd part of it all was that I felt unhappy because I could not control my hatred for that woman whom, in good conscience, I could not find guilty of anything. She had for me neither love nor dislike, which was quite natural; but, being young and disposed to enjoy myself, I had become, without any wilful malice on her part, an eyesore to her and the butt of her bantering jokes, which my sensitiveness exaggerated greatly. For all that I had an ardent wish to punish her and to make her repent. I thought of nothing else. At one time I would think of devoting all my intelligence and all my money to kindling an amorous passion in her heart and then revenging myself by treating her with contempt. But I soon realised the impracticability of such a plan, for, even supposing that I should succeed in finding my way to her heart, was I the man to resist my own success with such a woman? I certainly would not flatter myself that I was so strong-minded. But I was the pet child of fortune, and my position was suddenly altered.

M. D— R— having sent me with dispatches to M. de Condulmer, captain of a galleass, I had to wait until midnight to deliver them, and, when I returned, I found that M. D— R— had retired to his apartment for the night. As soon as he was visible in the morning, I went to him to render an account of my mission. I had been with him only a few minutes when his valet brought a letter saying that Madame F—'s adjutant was waiting for an answer. M. D— R— read the note, tore it to pieces and in his excitement stamped with his foot upon the fragments. He walked up and down the room for a little time, then wrote an answer and rang for the adjutant, to whom he delivered it. He then recovered his usual composure, concluded the perusal of the dispatch sent by M. de Condulmer and told me to write a letter. He was looking it over when the valet came in, telling me that Madame F— desired to see me. M. D— R— told me that he did not require my services any more for the present and that I might go. I left the room, but I had not gone ten yards when he called me back to remind me that my duty was to know nothing; I begged to assure him that I was well aware of that. I ran to Madame F—'s house, very eager to know what she wanted with me. I was introduced immediately and was greatly surprised to find her sitting up in bed, her countenance flushed and excited and her eyes red from the tears she had evidently just been shedding. My heart was beating quickly, yet I did not know why.

"Pray be seated," she said. "I wish to speak with you."

"Madame," I answered, "I am not worthy of so great a favour and have not yet done anything to deserve it; allow me to remain standing."

She very likely recollected that she had never been so polite before, and dared not press me any further. She collected her thoughts for an instant or two and said to me:

"Last evening my husband lost two hundred sequins upon trust at your faro bank; he believed that amount to be in my hands, and I must therefore give it to him immediately, as he is bound in honour to pay his losses to-day. Unfortunately I have disposed of the money and am in great trouble. I thought you might tell Maroli that I have paid you the amount lost by my husband. Here is a ring of some value; keep it until the 1st of January, when I will return the two hundred sequins, for which I am ready to give you my note of hand."

"I accept the note of hand, madame, but cannot consent to deprive you of your ring. I must also tell you that M. F.— must go himself to the bank, or send someone there, to redeem his debt. Within ten minutes you shall have the amount you require."

I left her without waiting for an answer and returned within a few minutes with the two hundred ducats, which I handed to her, and, putting in my pocket her note of hand which she had just written, I bowed to take my leave, but she addressed to me these precious words, "I believe, sir, that if I had known that you were so well disposed to oblige me, I could not have made up my mind to beg that service from you."

"Well, madame, in future be quite certain that there is not a man in the world capable of refusing you such an insignificant service whenever you will condescend to ask for it in person."

"What you say is very complimentary, but I trust never to find myself again under the necessity of making such a cruel experiment."

I left Madame F—, thinking of the shrewdness of her answer. She had not told me that I was mistaken, as I had expected she would, for that would have caused her some humiliation: she knew that I was with M. D— R— when the adjutant had brought her letter, and she could not doubt that I was aware of the refusal she had met with. The fact of her not mentioning it proved to me that she was jealous of her own dignity; it afforded me great gratification, and I thought her worthy of adoration. I saw clearly that she could have no love for M. D— R— and that she was not loved by him, and the discovery made me leap for joy. From that moment I felt I was in love with her, and I conceived the hope that she might return my ardent affection.

The first thing I did when I returned to my room was to cross out with ink every word of her note of hand except her name in such a manner that it was impossible to guess at the contents, and, putting it in an envelope carefully sealed, I deposited it in the hands of a public notary, who stated in the receipt he gave me for the envelope that he would deliver it only to Madame F— whenever she should request its delivery.

The same evening M. F— came to the bank, paid me, played with cash in hand and won fifty ducats. What caused me the greatest surprise was that M. D— R— continued to be very gracious to Madame F— and that she remained exactly the same towards him as she used to be before. He did not even inquire what she wanted when she had sent for me. But, if she did not seem to change her manner towards my

master, it was a very different case with me, for, whenever she was opposite to me at dinner, she frequently addressed herself to me and thus gave me many opportunities of showing my education and my wit in amusing stories or in remarks, in which I took care to blend instruction with witty jests. At that time I had the great talent of making others laugh while I kept a serious countenance myself. I had learnt that accomplishment from M. de Malipiero, my first master in the art of good breeding, who used to say to me, "If you wish your audience to cry, you must shed tears yourself, but, if you wish to make them laugh, you must contrive to look as serious as a judge."

In everything I did, in every word I uttered in the presence of Madame F—, the only aim I had was to please her, but I did not wish her to suppose so, and I never looked at her unless she spoke to me. I wanted to force her curiosity, to compel her to suspect, nay, to guess my secret, but without giving her any advantage over me; it was necessary for me to proceed by slow degrees. In the meantime and until I should have a greater happiness, I was glad to see that my money, that magic talisman, and my good conduct obtained me a consideration much greater than I could have hoped to obtain either through my position or from my age or in consequence of any talent I might have shown in the profession I had adopted.

Towards the middle of November the soldier who acted as my servant was attacked with inflammation of the chest; I gave notice of it to the captain of his company, and he was carried to the hospital. On the fourth day I was told that he would not recover and that he had received the last sacraments; in the evening I happened to be at his captain's when the priest who had attended him came to announce his death and deliver a small parcel which the dying man had entrusted to him, to be given up to his captain only after death. The parcel contained a brass seal engraved with ducal arms, a certificate of baptism and a sheet of paper covered with writing in French. Captain Camporese, who spoke only Italian, begged me to translate the paper, the contents of which were as follows:

"My will is that this paper, which I have written and signed with my own hand, shall be delivered to my captain only after I have breathed my last; until then my confessor shall not make any use of it, for I entrust it to his hands only under the seal of confession. I entreat my captain to have me buried in a vault from which my body can be exhumed in case the duke, my father, should request its exhumation. I entreat him likewise to forward my certificate of baptism, the seal with the armoial bearings of my family and a legal certificate of my birth to the French ambassador in Venice, who will send the whole to the duke, my father, my rights of primogeniture belonging after my demise to the prince, my brother. In faith of which I have signed and sealed these presents.—FRANÇOIS VI, CHARLES-PHILLIPPE-LOUIS FOUCAUD, PRINCE DE LA ROCHEFOUCAULD."

The certificate of baptism, delivered at St. Sulpice, gave the same

names, and the title of the father was François V. The name of the mother was Gabrielle du Plessis.

As I was concluding my translation, I could not help bursting into loud laughter; but the foolish captain, who thought my mirth out of place, hurried out to render an account of the affair to the *provveditore generale*, and I went to the coffee-house, not doubting for one moment that His Excellency would laugh at the captain and that the post-mortem buffoonery would greatly amuse the whole of Corfu.

I had known in Rome at Cardinal Acquaviva's the Abbé de Liancourt, great-grandson of Charles, whose sister, Gabrielle du Plessis, had been the wife of François V, but that dated from the beginning of the last century. I had made a copy from the records of the cardinal of the account of certain circumstances which the Abbé de Liancourt wanted to communicate to the court of Spain and in which there were a great many particulars respecting the house of du Plessis. I thought at the same time that the singular imposture of La Valeur (such was the name by which my soldier generally went) was absurd and without a motive, since it was to be known only after his death and could not therefore prove of any advantage to him.

Half an hour afterwards, as I was opening a fresh pack of cards, the Adjutant Sanzonio came in and told the important news in the most serious manner. He had just come from the office of the *provveditore*, where Captain Camporese had run in the utmost hurry to deposit in the hands of His Excellency the seal and the papers of the deceased prince. His Excellency had immediately issued his orders for the burial of the prince in a vault with all the honours due to his exalted rank. Another half hour passed, and M. Minolto, adjutant of the *provveditore generale*, came to inform me that His Excellency wanted to see me. I passed the cards to Major Maroli and went to His Excellency's house. I found him at supper with several ladies, three or four naval commanders, Madame F— and M. D— R—.

"So your servant was a prince!" said the old general to me.

"Your Excellency, I never would have suspected it, and even now that he is dead, I do not believe it."

"Why? He is dead, but he was not insane. You have seen his armorial bearings and his certificate of baptism, as well as what he wrote with his own hand. When a man is so near death, he does not fancy practical jokes."

"If Your Excellency is satisfied of the truth of the story, my duty is to remain silent."

"The story cannot be anything but true, and your doubts surprise me."

"I doubt, monsignor, because I happen to have positive information respecting the families of La Rochefoucauld and du Plessis. Besides, I have seen too much of the man. He was not a madman, but he certainly was an extravagant jester. I have never seen him write, and he has told me himself a score of times that he had never learned."

"The paper he has written proves the contrary. His arms have the

ducal bearings; but perhaps you are not aware that M. de la Rochefoucauld is a duke and peer of the French realm?"

"I beg Your Eminence's pardon, I know all about it; I know even more, for I know that François VI married a daughter of the house of Vivonne."

"You know nothing."

When I heard this remark, as foolish as it was rude, I resolved on remaining silent, and it was with some pleasure that I observed the joy felt by all the male guests at what they thought an insult and a blow to my vanity. An officer remarked that the deceased was a fine man, a witty man, and had shown wonderful cleverness in keeping up his assumed character so well that no one ever had the faintest suspicion of what he really was. A lady said that, if she had known him, she would have been certain to find him out. Another flatterer, belonging to that mean, contemptible race always to be found near the great and wealthy of the earth, assured us that the late prince had always shown himself cheerful, amiable, obliging, devoid of haughtiness towards his comrades and that he used to sing beautifully. "He was only twenty-five years of age," said Madame Sagredo, looking me full in the face, "and, if he was endowed with all those qualities, you must have discovered them."

"I can only give you, madame, a true likeness of the man, such as I have seen him. Always gay, often even to folly, for he could throw a somersault beautifully; singing songs of a very erotic kind; full of stories and of popular tales of magic, miracles and a thousand marvellous feats which common sense refused to believe and which, for that very reason, provoked the mirth of his hearers. His faults were that he was drunken, dirty, quarrelsome, dissolute and somewhat of a cheat. I put up with all his deficiencies because he dressed my hair to my taste and his constant chattering offered me the opportunity of practising the colloquial French which cannot be acquired from books. He had always assured me that he was born in Picardy, the son of a common peasant, and that he had deserted from the French army. He may have deceived me when he said that he could not write."

Just then Camporese rushed into the room and announced that La Valeur was yet breathing. The general, looking at me significantly, said that he would be delighted if the man could be saved.

"And I likewise, monsignor, but his confessor will certainly kill him to-night."

"Why should the father confessor kill him?"

"To escape the galleys to which Your Excellency would not fail to send him for having violated the secrecy of the confessional."

Everybody burst out laughing, but the foolish old general knitted his brows. The guests retired soon afterwards, and Madame F—, whom I had preceded to the carriage, M. D— R— having offered her his arm, invited me to get in with her, saying that it was raining. It was the first time that she had bestowed such an honour upon me.

"I am of your opinion about that prince," she said, "but you have incurred the displeasure of the *provveditore*."

"I am very sorry, madame, but it could not have been avoided, for I cannot help speaking the truth openly."

"You might have spared him," remarked M. D— R—, "the cutting jest of the confessor killing the false prince."

"You are right, sir, but I thought it would make him laugh as well as it made madame and Your Excellency. In conversation people generally do not object to a witty jest causing merriment and laughter."

"True; only those who have not wit enough to laugh do not like the jest."

"I bet a hundred sequins that the madman will recover and that, having the general on his side, he will reap all the advantages of his imposture. I long to see him treated as a prince and making love to Madame Sagredo."

Hearing the last words, Madame F—, who did not like Madame Sagredo, laughed heartily, and, as we were getting out of the carriage, M. D— R— invited me to accompany them upstairs. He was in the habit of spending half an hour alone with her at her own house when they had taken supper together with the general, for her husband never showed himself. It was the first time that the happy couple admitted a third person to their *tête-à-tête*. I felt very proud of the compliment and thought it might have important results for me. My satisfaction, which I concealed as well as I could, did not prevent me from being very gay or from giving a comic turn to every subject brought forward by the lady or by her lord.

We kept up our pleasant trio for four hours and did not return to the mansion of M. D— R— until two o'clock in the morning. It was during that night that Madame F— and M. D— R— really made my acquaintance. Madame F— told him that she had never laughed so much and that she had never imagined that a conversation, in appearance so simple, could afford so much pleasure and merriment. On my side, I discovered in her so much wit and cheerfulness that I became deeply enamoured and went to bed fully satisfied that in the future I could not keep up the show of indifference which I had so far assumed towards her.

When I woke up the next morning, I heard from the new soldier who served me that La Valeur was better and had been pronounced out of danger by the physician. At dinner the conversation fell upon him, but I did not open my lips. Two days afterwards the general gave orders to have him removed to a comfortable apartment, sent him a servant, clothed him, and, the over-credulous *provveditore* having paid him a visit, all the naval commanders and officers thought it their duty to follow his example; the general curiosity was excited, there was a rush to see the new prince. M. D— R— followed his leaders, and, Madame Sagredo having set the ladies in motion, they all called upon him, with the exception of Madame F—, who told me laughingly that she would not pay him a visit unless I would consent to

introduce her. I begged to be excused. The knave was called Your Highness, and the wonderful prince styled Madame Sagredo his princess. M. D— R— tried to persuade me to call upon the rogue, but I told him that I had said too much and that I was neither courageous nor mean enough to retract my words. The whole imposture would soon have been discovered if anyone had possessed a *Peerage*, but it just happened that there was not a copy in Corfu, and the French consul, a fat blockhead like many other consuls, knew nothing of family trees. The madcap La Valeur began to walk out a week after his metamorphosis into a prince. He dined and had supper every day with the general and was present every evening at the reception, during which, owing to his intemperance, he always went fast asleep. Yet there were two reasons which kept up the belief of his being a prince: the first was that he did not seem afraid of the news awaited from Venice, where the *provveditore* had written immediately after the discovery; the second was that he solicited from the bishop the punishment of the priest who had betrayed his secret by violating the seal of confession. The poor priest had already been sent to prison, and the *provveditore* had not the courage to defend him. The new prince had been invited to dinner by all the naval officers, but M. D— R— had not made up his mind to imitate them so far because Madame F— had clearly warned him that she would dine at her own house on the day he was invited. I had likewise respectfully intimated that on the same occasion I would take the liberty of dining somewhere else.

I met the prince one day as I was coming out of the old fortress leading to the esplanade. He stopped and reproached me for not having called upon him. I laughed and advised him to think of his safety before the arrival of the news which would expose all the imposture, in which case the *provveditore* was certain to treat him very severely. I offered to help him in his flight from Corfu and to get a Neapolitan captain, whose ship was ready to sail, to conceal him on board; but the fool, instead of accepting my offer, loaded me with insults.

He was courting Madame Sagredo, who treated him very well, feeling proud that a French prince should have given her the preference over all the other ladies. One day when she was dining in great ceremony at M. D— R—'s house, she asked me why I had advised the prince to run away.

"I have it from his own lips," she added, "and he cannot make out your obstinacy in believing him an impostor."

"I gave him that advice, madame, because my heart is good, and my judgment sane."

"Then we are all of us a lot of fools, the *provveditore* included?"

"That deduction would not be right, madame. An opinion contrary to that of another does not necessarily make a fool of the person who entertains it. It might possibly turn out in ten or twelve days that I have been entirely mistaken myself, but I should not consider myself a fool in consequence. In the meantime, a lady of your intelligence must

have discovered whether that man is a peasant or a prince by his education and manners. For instance, does he dance well?"

"He does not know one step, but he is the first to laugh about it; he says he never would learn dancing."

"Does he behave well at table?"

"Well, he doesn't stand on ceremony. He does not want his plate to be changed, he helps himself with his spoon out of the dishes; he does not know how to check an eructation or a yawn, and, if he feels tired, he leaves the table. It is evident that he has been very badly brought up."

"And yet he is very pleasant, I suppose. Is he clean and neat?"

"No; but then, he is not yet well provided with linen."

"I am told that he is very sober."

"You are joking. He leaves the table intoxicated twice a day, but he ought to be pitied, for he cannot drink wine and keep his head clear. Then he swears like a trooper, and we all laugh, but he never takes offence."

"Is he witty?"

"He has a wonderful memory, for he tells us new stories every day."

"Does he speak of his family?"

"Very often of his mother, whom he loved tenderly. She was a du Plessis."

"If his mother is still alive she must be a hundred and fifty years old."

"What nonsense!"

"Not at all; she was married in the days of Marie de Médicis."

"But the certificate of baptism names the prince's mother, and his seal——"

"Does he know what armorial bearings he has on that seal?"

"Do you doubt it?"

"Very strongly—or, rather, I am certain that he knows nothing about it."

We left the table, and the prince was announced. He came in, and Madame Sagredo lost no time in saying to him, "Prince, here is M. Casanova; he claims that you do not know your own armorial bearings." Hearing these words, he came up to me, sneering, called me a coward and gave me a smack on the face which almost stunned me. I left the room very slowly, not forgetting my hat and cane, and went downstairs, while M. D— R— was loudly ordering servants to throw the madman out of the window.

I left the palace and went to the esplanade in order to wait for him. The moment I saw him, I ran to meet him and beat him so violently with my cane that one blow alone ought to have killed him. He drew back and found himself brought to a stand between two walls, where, to avoid being beaten to death, his only resource was to draw his sword, but the cowardly scoundrel did not even think of his weapon, and I left him on the ground, covered with blood. The crowd formed a line for me to pass, and I went to the coffee-house, where I drank a glass of lemonade without sugar, to precipitate the bitter saliva which rage

had brought up from my stomach. In a few minutes I found myself surrounded by all the young officers of the garrison, who joined in the general opinion that I ought to have killed him, and they at last annoyed me, for it was not my fault if I had not done so, and I would certainly have taken his life if he had drawn his sword.

I had been in the coffee-house for half an hour when the general's adjutant came to tell me that His Excellency ordered me to put myself under arrest on board the *bastarda*, a galley on which the prisoners had their legs in irons like galley slaves. The dose was rather too strong to be swallowed, and I did not feel disposed to submit to it. "Very good, adjutant," I replied. "It shall be done." He went away, and I left the coffee-house a moment after him, but, when I reached the end of the street, instead of going towards the esplanade, I proceeded quickly towards the sea. I walked along the beach for a quarter of an hour, and, finding the boat empty but with a pair of oars, I got in her and, unfasting her, rowed as hard as I could towards a large *caicco*, sailing against the wind with six oars. As soon as I had come up to her, I went on board and asked the *carabouchiri* to sail before the wind and take me to a large wherry which could be seen at some distance, going towards Vido Rock. I abandoned the rowboat, and, after paying the master of the *caicco* generously, I got into the wherry, made a bargain with the skipper, who unfurled three sails, and in less than two hours we were fifteen miles away from Corfu. The wind having died away, I made the men row against the current, but towards midnight they told me that they could not row any longer, they were worn out with fatigue. They advised me to sleep until daybreak, but I refused to do so, and for a trifle I got them to put me on shore, without asking where I was, in order not to raise their suspicions.

It was enough for me to know that I was at a distance of twenty miles from Corfu and in a place where nobody could imagine me to be. The moon was shining, and I saw a church with a house adjoining, a long barn opened on both sides, a plain of about one hundred yards confined by hills, and nothing more. I found some straw in the barn and, laying myself down, slept until daybreak in spite of the cold. It was the first of December, and, although the climate is very mild in Corfu, I felt benumbed when I awoke, as I had no cloak over my thin uniform.

The bells begin to toll, and I proceed towards the church. The long-bearded *papa*, surprised at my sudden apparition, inquires whether I am *Romeo* (a Greek); I tell him that I am *Fragico* (Italian), but he turns his back on me and goes into his house, the door of which he shuts without condescending to listen to me.

I then turned towards the sea and saw a boat leaving a tartan lying at anchor within one hundred yards of the island; the boat had four oars and landed her passengers. I come up to them and meet a good-looking Greek, a woman and a young boy ten or twelve years old. Addressing myself to the Greek, I ask him whether he has had a pleasant passage and where he comes from. He answers in Italian that he

has sailed from Cephalonia with his wife and his son and that he is bound for Venice; he had landed to hear mass at the Church of Our Lady of Casopo, in order to ascertain whether his father-in-law was still alive and whether he would pay the amount he had promised him for the dowry of his wife.

"But how can you find it out?"

"The *papa* Deldimopulo will tell me; he will communicate faithfully the oracle of the Holy Virgin."

I say nothing and follow him into the church; he speaks to the priest and gives him some money. The *papa* says the mass, enters the *sanctum sanctorum*, comes out again in a quarter of an hour, ascends the steps of the altar, turns towards his audience and, after meditating for a minute and stroking his long beard, delivers his oracle in a dozen words. The Greek of Cephalonia, who certainly could not boast of being as wise as Ulysses, appears very well pleased and gives more money to the impostor. We leave the church, and I ask him whether he feels satisfied with the oracle.

"Oh! quite satisfied. I know now that my father-in-law is alive and that he will pay me the dowry, if I consent to leave my child with him. I am aware that it is his fancy and I will give him the boy."

"Does the *papa* know you?"

"No; he is not even acquainted with my name."

"Have you any fine goods on board your tartan?"

"Yes; come and breakfast with me; you can see all I have."

"Very willingly."

Delighted at hearing that oracles were not yet defunct, and satisfied that they will endure as long as there are in this world simple-minded men and deceitful, cunning priests, I followed the good man, who took me to his tartan and treated me to an excellent breakfast. His cargo consisted of cotton, linen, currants, oil and excellent wines. He had also a stock of nightcaps, stockings, cloaks in the Eastern fashion, umbrellas and sea biscuits, of which I was very fond; in those days I had thirty teeth, and it would have been difficult to find a finer set. Alas! I have but two left now, the other twenty-eight are gone with other tools quite as precious; but *dum vita superest, bene est*. I bought a small stock of everything he had except cotton, for which I had no use, and, without discussing his price, paid him the thirty-five or forty sequins he demanded, and, seeing my generosity, he made me a present of six beautiful botargoes.

I happened during our conversation to praise the wine of Zante, which he called *generoydes*, and he told me that, if I would accompany him to Venice, he would give me a bottle of that wine every day, including the quarantine. Always superstitious, I was on the point of accepting—and that for the most foolish reason, namely, that there would be no premeditation in that strange resolution and it might be the impulse of fate. Such was my nature in those days; alas! it is very different now. They say that it is because wisdom comes with old age,

but I cannot reconcile myself to cherish the effect of a most unpleasant cause.

Just as I was going to accept his offer, he proposes to sell me a very fine gun for ten sequins, saying that in Corfu anyone would be glad of it for twelve. The word Corfu upsets all my ideas on the spot! I fancy I hear the voice of my genius telling me to go back to that city. I purchase the gun for the ten sequins, and my honest Cephalonian, admiring my fair dealing, gives me, over and above our bargain, a beautiful Turkish pouch, well filled with powder and shot. Carrying my gun, with a good warm cloak over my uniform and with a large bag containing all my purchases, I take leave of the worthy Greek and am landed on the shore, determined on obtaining a lodging from the cheating *papa*, by fair means or foul. The good wine of my friend the Cephalonian had excited me just enough to make me carry my determination into immediate execution; I had in my pockets four or five hundred copper *gazzette*, which were very heavy, but which I had procured from the Greek, foreseeing that I might want them during my stay on the island.

I store my bag away in the barn and proceed, gun in hand, towards the house of the priest; the church was closed.

I must give my readers some idea of the state I was in at that moment. I was quietly hopeless. The three or four hundred sequins I had with me did not prevent me from realising that I was in very great insecurity on the island; I could not remain long, I would soon be found out, and, being guilty of desertion, I should be treated accordingly. I did not know what to do, and that is always an unpleasant predicament. It would be absurd for me to return to Corfu of my own accord; my flight would then be useless, and I should be thought a fool, for my return would be a proof of cowardice or stupidity; yet I did not feel the courage to desert altogether. The chief cause of my indecision was not that I had a thousand sequins in the hands of the faro banker, or my well stocked wardrobe, or the fear of not getting a living somewhere else, but the unpleasant recollection that I should leave behind me a woman whom I loved to adoration and from whom I had not yet obtained any favour, not even that of kissing her hand. In such distress of mind I could not do anything else but abandon myself to chance, whatever the result might be, and the most essential thing for the present was to secure a lodging and my daily food.

I knock at the door of the priest's dwelling. He looks out of a window and shuts it without listening to me. I knock again, I swear, I call out loudly, all in vain. Giving way to my rage, I take aim at a poor sheep grazing with several others at a short distance and kill it. The herdsman begins to scream, the *papa* shows himself at the window, calling out, "Thieves! Murder!" and orders the alarm bell to be rung. Three bells are immediately set in motion, I foresee a general gathering; what is going to happen? I do not know, but, happen what will, I load my gun and await coming events.

In less than ten minutes I see a crowd of peasants coming down the

hills, armed with guns, pitchforks and cudgels; I withdraw inside the barn, but without the slightest fear, for I cannot suppose that, seeing me alone, these men will murder me without listening to me.

The first ten or twelve peasants come forward, gun in hand and ready to fire; I stop them by throwing down my *gazette*, which they lose no time in picking up from the ground, and I keep on throwing money down as the men come forward, until I have no more left. The clowns were looking at each other in great astonishment, not knowing what to make of a well dressed young man, looking very peaceful and throwing his money to them with such generosity. I could not speak to them until the deafening noise of the bells should cease. I quietly sit down on my large bag and keep still, but, as soon as I can be heard, I begin to address the men. The priest, however, assisted by his beadle and by the herdsman, interrupts me, and all the more easily since I was speaking Italian. My three enemies, who talked all at once, were trying to excite the crowd against me.

One of the peasants, an elderly and reasonable-looking man, comes up to me and asks me in Italian why I killed the sheep.

"To eat it, my good fellow, but not before I have paid for it."

"But his holiness, the *papa*, might choose to charge one sequin for it."

"Here is one sequin."

The priest takes the money and goes away; war is over. The peasant tells me that he has served in the campaign of 1716 and that he was at the defence of Corfu. I compliment him and ask him to find me a lodging and a man able to prepare my meals. He answers that he will procure me a whole house and that he will be my cook himself, but I must go up the hill. No matter! He calls two stout fellows, one takes my bag, the other shoulders my sheep, and forward! As we are walking along, I tell him:

"My good man, I would like to have in my service twenty-four fellows like these, under military discipline. I would give each man twenty *gazette* a day, and you would have forty as my lieutenant."

"I will," says the old soldier, "raise for you this very day a body-guard of which you will be proud."

We reach a very convenient house, containing on the ground floor three rooms and a stable, which I immediately turn into a guardroom.

My lieutenant went to get what I wanted and particularly a needlewoman to make me some shirts. In the course of the day I had furniture, bedding, kitchen utensils, a good dinner, twenty-four well equipped soldiers, a superannuated sempstress and several young girls to make my shirts. After supper I found my position highly pleasant, being surrounded with some thirty persons who looked upon me as their sovereign, although they could not make out what had brought me to their island. The only thing which struck me as disagreeable was that the young girls could not speak Italian, and I did not know Greek enough to enable me to make love to them.

The next morning my lieutenant had the guard relieved, and I could not help bursting into a merry laugh. They were like a flock of sheep;

but I cannot reconcile myself to cherish the effect of a most unpleasant cause.

Just as I was going to accept his offer, he proposes to sell me a very fine gun for ten sequins, saying that in Corfu anyone would be glad of it for twelve. The word Corfu upsets all my ideas on the spot! I fancy I hear the voice of my genius telling me to go back to that city. I purchase the gun for the ten sequins, and my honest Cephalonian, admiring my fair dealing, gives me, over and above our bargain, a beautiful Turkish pouch, well filled with powder and shot. Carrying my gun, with a good warm cloak over my uniform and with a large bag containing all my purchases, I take leave of the worthy Greek and am landed on the shore, determined on obtaining a lodging from the cheating *papa*, by fair means or foul. The good wine of my friend the Cephalonian had excited me just enough to make me carry my determination into immediate execution; I had in my pockets four or five hundred copper *gazzette*, which were very heavy, but which I had procured from the Greek, foreseeing that I might want them during my stay on the island.

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In less than ten minutes I see a crowd of peasants coming down the

hills, armed with guns, pitchforks and cudgels; I withdraw inside the barn, but without the slightest fear, for I cannot suppose that, seeing me alone, these men will murder me without listening to me.

The first ten or twelve peasants come forward, gun in hand and ready to fire; I stop them by throwing down my *gazette*, which they lose no time in picking up from the ground, and I keep on throwing money down as the men come forward, until I have no more left. The clowns were looking at each other in great astonishment, not knowing what to make of a well dressed young man, looking very peaceful and throwing his money to them with such generosity I could not speak to them until the deafening noise of the bells should cease. I quietly sit down on my large bag and keep still, but, as soon as I can be heard, I begin to address the men. The priest, however, assisted by his beadle and by the herdsman, interrupts me, and all the more easily since I was speaking Italian. My three enemies, who talked all at once, were trying to excite the crowd against me.

One of the peasants, an elderly and reasonable-looking man, comes up to me and asks me in Italian why I killed the sheep.

"To eat it, my good fellow, but not before I have paid for it."

"But his holiness, the *papa*, might choose to charge one sequin for it."

"Here is one sequin."

The priest takes the money and goes away; war is over. The peasant tells me that he has served in the campaign of 1716 and that he was at the defence of Corfu. I compliment him and ask him to find me a lodging and a man able to prepare my meals. He answers that he will procure me a whole house and that he will be my cook himself, but I must go up the hill. No matter! He calls two stout fellows, one takes my bag, the other shoulders my sheep, and forward! As we are walking along, I tell him:

"My good man, I would like to have in my service twenty-four fellows like these, under military discipline. I would give each man twenty *gazette* a day, and you would have forty as my lieutenant."

"I will," says the old soldier, "raise for you this very day a body-guard of which you will be proud."

We reach a very convenient house, containing on the ground floor three rooms and a stable, which I immediately turn into a guardroom.

My lieutenant went to get what I wanted and particularly a needlewoman to make me some shirts. In the course of the day I had furniture, bedding, kitchen utensils, a good dinner, twenty-four well equipped soldiers, a superannuated sempstress and several young girls to make my shirts. After supper I found my position highly pleasant, being surrounded with some thirty persons who looked upon me as their sovereign, although they could not make out what had brought me to their island. The only thing which struck me as disagreeable was that the young girls could not speak Italian, and I did not know Greek enough to enable me to make love to them.

The next morning my lieutenant had the guard relieved, and I could not help bursting into a merry laugh. They were like a flock of sheep;

all fine men, well made and strong; but without uniform and without discipline the finest band is but a herd. However, they quickly learned how to present arms and to obey the orders of their officer. I caused three sentinels to be placed, one before the guardroom, one at my door and the third where he could have a good view of the sea. This sentinel was to give me warning of the approach of any armed boat or vessel. For the first two or three days I considered all this as mere amusement, but, thinking that I might really want the men to repel force by force, I had some idea of making my army take an oath of allegiance. I did not do so, however, although my lieutenant assured me that I had only to express my wishes, for my generosity had captivated the love of all the islanders.

My sempstress, who had procured some young needlewomen to sew my shirts, had expected that I would fall in love with one and not with all, but my amorous zeal overstepped her hopes, and all the pretty ones had their turn; they were all well satisfied with me, and the sempstress was rewarded for her good offices. I was leading a delightful life, for my table was supplied with excellent dishes, juicy mutton and snipe so delicious that I have never tasted their like except in St. Petersburg. I drank scopol wine or the best muscatel of the Archipelago. My lieutenant was my only table companion. I never took a walk without him and two of my bodyguard, in order to defend myself against the attacks of a few young men who had a spite against me because they fancied, not without some reason, that my needlewomen, their mistresses, had left them on my account. I often thought, while I was rambling about that island, that without money I should have been unhappy and that I was indebted to my gold for all the happiness I was enjoying; but it was right to suppose at the same time that, if I had not felt my purse pretty heavy, I would not have been likely to leave Corfu.

I had thus been playing the petty king with success for a week or ten days when, towards ten o'clock at night, I heard the sentinel challenge. My lieutenant went out and returned, announcing that an honest-looking man, who spoke Italian, wished to see me on important business. I had him brought in, and, in the presence of my lieutenant, he told me in Italian:

"Next Sunday, the *papa* Deldimopulo will fulminate against you the *cataramonachia*. If you do not prevent him, a slow fever will send you into the next world in six weeks."

"I have never heard of such a drug."

"It is not a drug. It is a curse pronounced by a priest with the Host in his hands, and it is sure to be fulfilled."

"What reason can the priest have to murder me?"

"You disturb the peace and discipline of his parish. You have seduced several young girls, and now their lovers refuse to marry them."

I made him drink and, thanking him heartily, wished him good night. His warning struck me as deserving my attention, for, if I had no fear of the *cataramonachia*, in which I had not the slightest faith, I feared certain poisons which might be by far more efficient. I passed a

very quiet night, but at daybreak I got up and, without saying anything to my lieutenant, went straight to the church, where I found the priest, and addressed him in the following words, uttered in a tone likely to enforce conviction:

"On the first symptom of fever, I will shoot you like a dog. Throw over me a curse which will kill me instantly, or make your will. Farewell!"

Having thus warned him, I returned to my royal palace. Early on the following Monday, the *papa* called on me. I had a slight headache; he inquired after my health, and, when I told him that my head felt rather heavy, he made me laugh by the air of anxiety with which he assured me that it could be caused by nothing else than the heavy atmosphere of the island of Casopo.

Three days after his visit, the advanced sentinel gave the war-cry. The lieutenant went out to reconnoitre and after a short absence gave me notice that the long boat of an armed vessel had just landed an officer. Danger was at hand.

I go out myself, call my men to arms and, advancing a few steps, see an officer, accompanied by a guide, walking towards my dwelling. As he was alone, I had nothing to fear. I return to my room, giving orders to my lieutenant to receive him with all military honours and to introduce him. Then, girding my sword, I wait for my visitor.

In a few minutes Adjutant Minolto, the same who had brought me the order to put myself under arrest, makes his appearance.

"You are alone," I say to him, "and therefore you come as a friend. Let us embrace."

"I must come as a friend, for, as an enemy, I should not have enough men. But what I see seems a dream."

"Take a seat and dine with me. I will treat you splendidly."

"Most willingly, and after dinner we will leave the island together."

"You may go alone, if you like; but I will not leave this place until I have the certainty, not only that I shall not be sent to the *bastarda*, but also that I shall have every satisfaction from the knave, whom the general ought to send to the galleys."

"Be reasonable and come with me of your own accord. My orders are to take you by force, but, as I have not enough men to do so, I shall make my report, and the general will, of course, send a force sufficient to arrest you."

"Never! I will not be taken alive."

"You must be mad; believe me, you are in the wrong. You have disobeyed the order I brought you to go to the *bastarda*; in that you have acted wrongly and in that alone, for in every other respect you were perfectly right; the general himself says so."

"Then I ought to have put myself under arrest?"

"Certainly; obedience is necessary in our profession."

"Would you have obeyed if you had been in my place?"

"I cannot and will not tell you what I would have done, but I know that, if I had disobeyed orders, I should have been guilty of a crime."

"But if I surrendered now I should be treated like a criminal and much more severely than if I had obeyed that unjust order."

"I think not. Come with me and you will know everything."

"What! Go without knowing what fate may be in store for me? Do not expect it. Let us have dinner. If I am guilty of such a dreadful crime that violence must be used against me, I will surrender only to irresistible force. I cannot be worse off, but there may be blood spilled."

"You are mistaken; such conduct would only make you more guilty. But I say like you, let us have dinner. A good meal will very likely render you more disposed to listen to reason."

Our dinner was nearly over when we heard some noise outside. The lieutenant came in and informed me that the peasants were gathering in the neighbourhood of my house to defend me because a rumour had spread through the island that the felucca had been sent with orders to arrest me and take me to Corfu. I told him to undeceive the good fellows and to send them away, but to give them first a barrel of wine.

The peasants went away satisfied, but, to show their devotion to me, they all fired their guns.

"It is all very amusing," said the adjutant, "but it will turn out very serious if you make me go away alone, for my duty compels me to give an exact account of all I have witnessed."

"I will follow you if you will give me your word of honour to land me free in Corfu."

"I have orders to deliver your person to M. Foscari, on board the *bastarda*."

"Well, you shall not execute your orders this time."

"If you do not obey the commands of the general, his honour will compel him to use violence against you, and of course he can do it. But tell me, what would you do if the general should leave you on this island for the sake of the joke? There is no fear of that, however, and, after the report which I must give, the general will certainly make up his mind to stop the affair without shedding blood."

"Without a fight it will be difficult to arrest me, for with five hundred peasants in such a place as this I would not be afraid of three thousand men."

"One man will prove enough; you will be treated as a leader of rebels. All these peasants may be devoted to you, but they cannot protect you against one man who will shoot you for the sake of earning a few pieces of gold. I can tell you more than that: amongst all those men who surround you there is not one who would not murder you for twenty sequins. Believe me, go with me. Come and enjoy the triumph which is awaiting you in Corfu. You will be courted and applauded. You will narrate yourself all your mad frolics, people will laugh and at the same time will admire you for having listened to reason the moment I came here. Everybody feels esteem for you, and M. D— R— thinks a great deal of you. He praises very highly the command you showed over your passion in refraining from thrusting your sword through that insolent fool, in order not to forget the

respect you owed to his house. The general himself must esteem you, for he cannot forget what you told him of that knave."

"What has become of him?"

Four days ago Major Sardina's frigate arrived with dispatches, in which the general must have found all the proof of the imposture, for he has caused the false duke or prince to disappear very suddenly. Nobody knows where he has been sent, and nobody ventures to mention the fellow before the general, for he made the most egregious blunder respecting him."

"But was the man received in society after the thrashing I gave him?"

"God forbid! Do you not recollect that he wore a sword? From that moment no one would receive him. His arm was broken and his jaw shattered to pieces. But, in spite of the state he was in, in spite of what he must have been suffering, His Excellency had him removed a week after you had treated him so severely. But your flight is what everyone has been wondering over. It was thought for three days that M. D— R— had concealed you in his house, and he was openly blamed for doing so. He had to declare loudly at the general's table that he was in the most complete ignorance of your whereabouts. His Excellency even expressed his anxiety about your escape, and it was only yesterday that your place of refuge was made known by a letter addressed by the priest of this island to the *proto-papa* Bulgari, in which he complained that an Italian officer had invaded the island of Casopo a week before and had committed unheard-of violence. He accused you of seducing all the girls and of threatening to shoot him if he dared to pronounce *cataramonachia* against you. This letter, which was read publicly at the evening reception, made the general laugh, but he ordered me to arrest you all the same."

"Madame Sagredo is the cause of it all."

"True, but she is well punished for it. You ought to call upon her with me to-morrow."

"To-morrow? Are you then certain that I shall not be placed under arrest?"

"Yes, for I know that the general is a man of honour."

"I am of the same opinion. Well, let us go on board your felucca. We will embark together after midnight."

"Why not now?"

"Because I will not run the risk of spending the night on board M. Foscari's *bastarda*. I want to reach Corfu by daylight, so as to make your victory more brilliant."

"But what shall we do for the next eight hours?"

"We will pay a visit to some beauties of a species unknown in Corfu and have a good supper."

I ordered my lieutenant to send plenty to eat and to drink to the men on board the felucca, to prepare a splendid supper and to spare nothing, as I should leave the island at midnight. I made him a present of all my provisions except such as I wanted to take with me; these

I sent on board. My janissaries, to whom I gave a week's pay, insisted upon escorting me, fully equipped, as far as the boat, which made the adjutant laugh all the way.

We reached Corfu by eight o'clock in the morning and went alongside the *bastarda*. The adjutant consigned me to M. Foscari, assuring me that he would immediately give notice of my arrival to M. D— R—, send my luggage to his house and report the success of his expedition to the general.

M. Foscari, the commander of the *bastarda*, treated me very badly. If he had been blessed with any delicacy of feeling, he would not have been in such a hurry to have me put in irons. He might have talked to me and thus delayed for a quarter of an hour that operation, which greatly vexed me. But, without uttering a single word, he sent me to the *capo di scala*, who made me sit down and told me to put my foot forward to receive the irons, which, however, do not dishonour anyone in that community, not even the galley slaves, for they are better treated than soldiers.

My right leg was already in irons and the left one was in the hands of the man for the completion of that pleasant ceremony when the adjutant of His Excellency came to tell the executioner to set me at liberty and return me my sword. I wanted to present my compliments to the noble M. Foscari, but the adjutant, rather ashamed, assured me that His Excellency did not expect me to do so.

The first thing I did was to pay my respects to the general, without saying one word to him, but he told me with a serious countenance to be more prudent in future and to learn that a soldier's first duty was to obey and above all to be modest and discreet. I understood perfectly the meaning of the two last words and acted accordingly.

When I made my appearance at M. D— R—'s, I could see pleasure on everybody's face. Those moments have always been so dear to me that I have never forgotten them, they have afforded me consolation in time of adversity. If you would relish pleasure, you must endure pain, and delights are in proportion to the privations we have suffered. M. D— R— was so glad to see me that he came up to me and warmly embraced me. He presented me with a beautiful ring, which he took from his own finger, and told me that I had acted quite rightly in not letting anyone, and particularly himself, know where I had taken refuge.

"You can't think," he added, frankly, "how interested Madame F— was in your fate. She would be really delighted if you called on her immediately."

How delightful to receive such advice from his own lips! But the word "immediately" annoyed me, because, having passed the night on board the felucca, I was afraid that the disorder of my toilet might injure me in her eyes. Yet I could neither refuse M. D— R— nor tell him the reason of my refusal, and I bethought myself that I could make a merit of it in the eyes of Madame F—.

I therefore went at once to her house; the goddess was not yet

visible, but her attendant told me to come in, assuring me that her mistress's bell would soon be heard and that she would be very sorry if I did not wait to see her. I spent half an hour with that young and indiscreet person, who was a very charming girl, and learned from her many things which caused me great pleasure and particularly all that had been said respecting my escape. I found that throughout the affair my conduct had met with general approbation.

As soon as Madame F— had seen her maid, she had me shown in. The curtains were drawn aside, and I thought I saw Aurora surrounded with the roses and the pearls of morning. I told her that, if it had not been for the order I received from M. D— R—, I would not have presumed to present myself before her in my travelling costume; and in the most friendly tone she answered that M. D— R—, knowing all the interest she felt in me, had been quite right to tell me to come, and she assured me that M. D— R— had the greatest esteem for me.

"I do not know, madame, how I have deserved such great happiness, when all I dared hope for was toleration."

"We all admired the control you kept over your feelings when you refrained from killing that insolent madman on the spot; he would have been thrown out of the window if he had not beat a hurried retreat."

"I should certainly have killed him, madame, if you had not been present."

"A very pretty compliment, but I can hardly believe that you thought of me in such a moment."

I did not answer, but cast my eyes down and gave a deep sigh. She observed my new ring and, in order to change the subject of conversation, praised M. D— R— very highly as soon as I had told her how he had presented it to me. She desired me to give her an account of my life on the island, and I did so, but allowed my pretty needlewomen to remain under a veil, for I had already learnt that in this word the truth must often remain untold.

All my adventures amused her much, and she greatly admired my conduct.

"Would you have the courage," she said, "to repeat all you have just told me, and exactly in the same terms, before the *provveditore generale*?"

"Most certainly, madame, provided he asked me himself."

"Well, then, prepare to redeem your promise. I want our excellent general to love you and to become your warmest protector, ~~so~~ as to shield you against every injustice and to promote your advancement. Leave it all to me."

Her reception fairly overwhelmed me with happiness, and, on leaving her house, I went to Major Maroli to find out the state of my finances. I was glad to hear that after my escape he had no longer considered me a partner in the faro bank. I took four hundred sequins from the cashier, reserving the right to become again a partner, should circumstances prove at any time favourable.

In the evening I made a careful toilet and called for the Adjutant Minolto in order to pay with him a visit to Madame Sagredo, the general's favourite. With the exception of Madame F—, she was the greatest beauty of Corfu. My visit surprised her because, as she had been the cause of all that had happened, she was very far from expecting it. She imagined that I had a spite against her. I undeceived her, speaking to her very candidly, and she treated me most kindly, inviting me to come now and then to spend the evening at her house. But I neither accepted nor refused her amiable invitation, knowing that Madame F— disliked her; and how could I be a frequent guest at her house with such a knowledge! Besides, Madame Sagredo was very fond of gambling, and, to please her, it was necessary either to lose or make her win, but, to accept such conditions, one must be in love with the lady or wish to make her conquest, and I had not the slightest idea of either. The Adjutant Minolto never played, but he had captivated the lady's good graces by his services in the character of Mercury.

When I returned to the palace, I found Madame F— alone, M. D— R— being engaged with his correspondence. She asked me to sit near her and tell her all my adventures in Constantinople. I did so and had no occasion to repent it. My meeting with Yusuf's wife pleased her extremely, but the bathing scene by moonlight made her blush with excitement. I veiled as much as I could of the too brilliant colours of my picture, but, when she did not find me clear, she would oblige me to be more explicit, and, as soon as I made myself better understood by giving to my recital a touch of voluptuousness (which I borrowed from her looks more than from my recollection), she would scold me and tell me that I might have disguised a little more. I felt that the path along which she was leading me would give her a liking for me, and I was satisfied that the man who can give birth to amorous desires is easily called upon to gratify them; it was the reward I was ardently longing for, and I dared to hope it would be mine, although I could see it only looming in the distance.

It happened that on that day M. D— R— had invited a large company to supper. I had, as a matter of course, to engross all conversation and give the fullest particulars of all that had taken place from the moment I received the order to place myself under arrest up to the time of my release from the *bastarda*. M. Foscari was seated next to me, and the last part of my narrative was not, I suppose, particularly agreeable to him.

The account of my adventures pleased everybody, and it was decided that the *provveditore generale* must have the pleasure of hearing my tale from my own lips. I mentioned that hay was very plentiful in Casopo, and, as that article was very scarce in Corfu, M. D— R— told me that I ought to seize the opportunity of making myself agreeable to the general by informing him of that circumstance without delay. I followed his advice the very next day and was very well

received, for His Excellency immediately ordered a squad of men to go to the island and bring large quantities of hay to Corfu.

A few days later Adjutant Minolto came to me in the coffee-house, and told me that the general wished to see me; this time I promptly obeyed his commands.

CHAPTER 15

THE room I entered was full of people. His Excellency, seeing me, smiled and drew upon me the attention of all his guests by saying aloud, "Here comes the young man who is a good judge of princes."

"My lord, I have become a judge of nobility by frequenting the society of men like you."

"The ladies are curious to know all you have done from the time of your escape from Corfu up to your return."

"Then you sentence me, monsignor, to make a public confession?"

"Exactly; but, as it is to be a confession, be careful not to omit the most insignificant circumstance and suppose that I am not in the room."

"On the contrary, I wish to receive absolution only from Your Excellency. But my story will be a long one."

"If such is the case, your confessor gives you permission to be seated."

I gave all the particulars of my adventures, with the exception of my dalliance with the nymphs of the island.

"Your story is a very instructive one," observed the general.

"Yes, my lord, for my adventures show that a young man is never nearer his utter ruin than when, excited by some great passion, he finds himself able to minister to it, thanks to the gold in his purse."

I was preparing to take my leave, when the major-domo came to inform me that His Excellency desired me to remain to supper. I had therefore the honour of a seat at his table, but not the pleasure of eating, for I was obliged to answer the questions addressed to me from all quarters and could not contrive to swallow a single mouthful. I was seated next to the *proto-papa* Bulgari, and I entreated his pardon for having ridiculed Deldimopulo's oracle. "It is nothing else but regular cheating," he said, "but it is very difficult to put a stop to it; it is an old custom."

A short time afterwards Madame F— whispered a few words to the general, who turned to me and said that he would be glad to hear me relate what had occurred to me in Constantinople with the wife of the Turk Yusuf and at another friend's house, where I had seen bathing by moonlight. I was rather surprised at such an invitation and told him that such frolics were not worth listening to and, the general not pressing me, no more was said about it. But I was astonished at Madame F—'s indiscretion; she had no business to make

my confidences public. I wanted her to be jealous of her own dignity, which I loved even more than her person.

Two or three days later she said to me:

"Why did you refuse to tell your adventures in Constantinople before the general?"

"Because I do not wish everybody to know that you allow me to tell you such things. What I may dare, madame, to say to you when we are alone I would certainly not say to you in public."

"And why not? It seems to me, on the contrary, that, if you are silent in public out of respect for me, you ought to be all the more silent when we are alone."

"I wanted to amuse you and have exposed myself to the danger of displeasing you, but I can assure you, madame, that I will not run such a risk again."

"I have no wish to pry into your intentions, but it strikes me that, if your wish was to please me, you ought not to have run the risk of achieving the opposite result. We take supper with the general this evening, and M. D— R— has been asked to bring you. I feel certain that the general will ask you again for your adventures in Constantinople, and this time you cannot refuse him."

M. D— R— came in and we went to the general's. I thought as we were driving along that, although Madame F— seemed to have intended to humiliate me, I ought to accept it all as a favour of fortune, because, by compelling me to explain my refusal of the general's request, Madame F— had, at the same time, compelled me to a declaration of my feelings, which was not without importance.

The *provveditore generale* gave me a friendly welcome and kindly handed me a letter which had come with the official dispatches from Constantinople. I bowed my thanks and put the letter in my pocket; but he told me that he was himself a great lover of news and that I could read my letter. I opened it; it was from Yusuf, who announced the death of Count de Bonneval. Hearing the name of the worthy Yusuf, the general asked me to tell him my adventures with his wife. I could not now refuse, and I began a story which amused and interested the general and his friends for an hour or so, but which was from beginning to end the work of my imagination. Thus I continued to respect the privacy of Yusuf, to avoid implicating the good name of Madame F— and to show myself in a light which was tolerably advantageous to me. My story, which was full of sentiment, did me a great deal of honour, and I felt very happy when I saw from the expression of Madame F—'s face that she was pleased with me, although somewhat surprised.

When we found ourselves again in her house, she told me in the presence of M. D— R— that the story I had related to the general was certainly very pretty, although purely imaginary, that she was not angry with me because I had amused her, but that she could not help remarking my obstinacy in refusing compliance with her wishes. Then, turning to M. D— R—, she said:

"M. Casanova pretends that, if he had given an account of his meeting with Yusuf's wife without changing anything, everybody would think that I allowed him to entertain me with improper stories. I want you to give your opinion about it. Will you," she added, speaking to me, "be so good as to relate immediately that adventure in the same words which you used when you told me of it?"

"Yes, madame, if you wish me to do so."

Stung to the quick by an indiscretion which, as I did not yet know women thoroughly, seemed to me without example, I cast all fears of displeasing to the winds, related the adventure with all the warmth of an impassioned poet and without disguising or attenuating in the least the desires which the charms of the Greek beauty had inspired in me.

"Do you think," said M. D— R— to Madame F—, "that he ought to have related that adventure before all our friends as he has just related it to us?"

"If it be wrong for him to tell it in public, it is also wrong to tell it to me in private."

"You are the only judge of that; yes, if he had displeased you; no, if he amused you. As for my own opinion, here it is: he has just now amused me very much, but he would have greatly displeased me if he had related the same adventure in public."

"Then," exclaimed Madame F—, "I must request you never to tell me in private anything that you cannot repeat in public."

"I promise, madame, to act always according to your wishes."

"It being understood," added M. D— R—, smiling, "that madame reserves all rights of repealing that order whenever she may think fit."

I was vexed, but I contrived not to show it. A few minutes more and we took leave of Madame F—.

I was beginning to understand that charming woman and to dread the ordeal to which she would subject me. But love was stronger than fear, and, fortified with hope, I had the courage to endure the thorns, so as to gather the rose at the end of my sufferings. I was particularly pleased to find that M. D— R— was not jealous of me, even when she seemed to dare him to it. This was a point of the greatest importance.

A few days afterwards, as I was entertaining her on various subjects, she remarked how unfortunate it had been for me to enter the lazaretto at Ancona without any money.

"In spite of my distress," I said, "I fell in love with a young and beautiful Greek slave, who very nearly contrived to make me break through all the sanitary laws."

"How so?"

"You are alone, madame, and I have not forgotten your orders."

"It is a very improper story?"

"No; yet I would not relate it to you in public."

"Well," she said, laughing. "I repeal my order, as M. D— R— said I would. Tell me all about it."

I told my story and, seeing that she was pensive, exaggerated the misery I had felt at not being able to complete my conquest.

"What do you mean by your 'misery'? I think that the poor girl was more to be pitied than you. You have never seen her since?"

"I beg your pardon, madame; I met her again, but I dare not tell you when or how."

"Now you must go on; it is all nonsense for you to stop. Tell me all; I expect you have been guilty of some black deed."

"Very far from it, madame, for it was a very sweet, although incomplete, enjoyment."

"Go on! But do not call things exactly by their names. It is not necessary to go into details."

Emboldened by the renewal of her order, I told her, without looking her in the face, of my meeting with the Greek slave in the presence of Bellino and of the act which was cut short by the appearance of her master. When I had finished my story, Madame F— remained silent, and I turned the conversation into a different channel, for, though I felt myself on an excellent footing with her, I knew likewise that I had to proceed with great prudence. She was too young to have lowered herself before, and she would certainly look upon a connection with me as a lowering of her dignity.

Fortune, which had always smiled upon me in the most hopeless cases, did not intend to ill-treat me on this occasion and procured me on that very same day a favour of a very peculiar nature. My charming lady-love, having pricked her finger rather severely, screamed loudly and stretched her hand towards me, entreating me to suck the blood flowing from the wound. You may judge, dear reader, whether I was long in seizing that beautiful hand, and, if you are—or if you have ever been—in love, you will easily guess the manner in which I performed my delightful work. What is a kiss? Is it not an ardent desire to inhale a portion of the being we love? Was not the blood I was sucking from that charming wound a portion of the woman I worshipped? When I had completed my work, she thanked me affectionately and told me to spit out the blood I had sucked.

"It is here," I said, placing my hand on my heart, "and God alone knows what happiness it has given me!"

"You have drunk my blood with happiness! Are you then a cannibal?"

"I believe not, madame; but it would have been sacrilege in my eyes if I had suffered one single drop of your blood to be lost."

One evening there was an unusually large attendance at M. D—R—'s assembly, and we were talking of the carnival, which was near at hand. Everybody was regretting the lack of actors and the impossibility of enjoying the pleasures of the theatre. I immediately offered to procure a good company at my expense if the boxes were at once subscribed for and the monopoly of the faro bank granted to me. No time was to be lost, for the carnival was approaching and I had to go to Otranto to engage a troupe. My proposal was accepted

with great joy, and the *provveditore generale* placed a felucca at my disposal. The boxes were all taken in three days, and a Jew took the pit, two nights a week excepted, which I reserved for my own profit.

The carnival being very long that year, I had every chance of success. It is said generally that the profession of theatrical manager is difficult, but, if that is the case, I have not found it so by experience, and am bound to affirm the contrary.

I left Corfu in the evening and, having a good breeze in my favour, reached Otranto by daybreak the following morning without the oarsmen having had to row a stroke. The distance from Corfu to Otranto is only about fifteen leagues.

I had no idea of landing, owing to the quarantine which is always enforced for any ship or boat coming to Italy from the east. I only went to the parlour of the lazaretto, where, placed behind a grating, you can speak to any person who calls and who must stand behind another grating placed opposite, at a distance of six feet.

As soon as I announced that I had come for the purpose of engaging a troupe of actors to perform in Corfu, the managers of the two companies then in Otranto came to the parlour to speak to me. I told them at once that I wished to see all the performers, one company at a time.

The two rival managers gave me then a very comic scene, each manager wanting the other to bring his troupe the first. The harbour-master told me that the only way to settle the matter was to say myself which of the two companies I would see first; one was from Naples, the other from Sicily. Not knowing either, I gave the preference to the former. Don Fastidio, the manager, was much vexed, while Battipaglia, the director of the second, was delighted because he hoped that, after seeing the Neapolitan troupe, I would engage his own.

An hour afterwards Fastidio returned with all his performers, and my surprise may be imagined when amongst them I recognised Petronio and his sister Marina, who, the moment she saw me, screamed for joy, jumped over the grating and threw herself in my arms. A terrible hubbub followed, and high words passed between Fastidio and the harbour-master. Marina being in the service of Fastidio, the captain compelled him to confine her to the lazaretto, where she would have to perform quarantine at his expense. The poor girl cried bitterly, but I could not remedy her imprudence.

I put a stop to the quarrel by telling Fastidio to show me all his people, one after the other. Petronio belonged to his company and played the lovers. He told me that he had a letter for me from Thérèse. I was also glad to see a Venetian of my acquaintance who played the pantaloone in the pantomime, three tolerably pretty actresses, a *pulcinella* and a scaramouch. Altogether, the troupe was a decent one.

I told Fastidio to name the lowest salary he wanted for all his company, assuring him that I would give the preference to his rival if he should ask me too much.

"Sir," he answered, "we are twenty and shall require six rooms with ten beds, one sitting-room for all of us and thirty Neapolitan ducats a day, all travelling expenses paid. Here is my stock of plays, and we will perform those that you may choose."

Thinking of poor Marina, who would have to remain in the lazaretto before she could reappear on the stage at Otranto, I told Fastidio to get the contract ready, as I wanted to go away immediately.

I had scarcely pronounced these words when war broke out again between the manager-elect and his unfortunate competitor. Battipaglia in his rage called Marina a harlot and said that she had arranged beforehand with Fastidio to violate the rules of the lazaretto in order to compel me to choose their troupe. Petronio, taking his sister's part, joined Fastidio, and the unlucky Battipaglia was dragged outside and treated to a generous dose of blows and fisticuffs, which was not exactly the thing to console him for a lost engagement.

Soon afterwards Petronio brought me Thérèse's letter. She was ruining the duke, getting rich accordingly and waiting for me in Naples.

Everything being ready towards evening, I left Otranto with twenty actors and six large trunks containing their complete wardrobes. A light breeze which was blowing from the south might have carried us to Corfu in ten hours, but, when we had sailed about one hour, my *carabouchiri* informed me that he could see by the moonlight a ship which might prove to be a corsair and get hold of us. I was unwilling to risk anything, so I ordered them to lower the sails and return to Otranto. At daybreak we sailed again with a good westerly wind, which would also have taken us to Corfu; but, after we had gone two or three hours, the captain pointed out to me a brigantine, evidently a pirate, for she was shaping her course so as to get to windward of us. I told him to change the course and to go by starboard, to see if the brigantine would follow us, and she immediately imitated our manœuvre. I could not go back to Otranto and had no wish to go to Africa, so I ordered the men to shape our course so as to land on the coast of Calabria by hard rowing and at the nearest point. The sailors, who were frightened to death, communicated their fears to my comedians, and soon I heard nothing but weeping and sobbing. Every one of them was calling earnestly upon some saint, but not one single prayer to God did I hear. The bewailings of Scaramouch and the dull and spiritless despair of Fastidio offered a picture which would have made me laugh heartily if the danger had been imaginary and not real. Marina alone was cheerful and happy, because she did not realise the danger we were running, and she laughed at the terror of the crew and of her companions.

A strong breeze sprang up towards evening, so I ordered them to clap on all sail and scud before the wind, even if it should get stronger. In order to escape the pirate, I had made up my mind to cross the gulf. We took the wind through the night and in the morning were eighty miles from Corfu, which I determined to reach by rowing. We

were in the middle of the gulf, and the sailors were worn out with fatigue, but I had no longer any fear. A gale began to blow from the north, and in less than an hour it was blowing so hard that we were compelled to sail close to the wind in a fearful manner. The felucca looked every moment as if it must capsize. Everyone looked terrified, but kept complete silence, for I had enjoined it on penalty of death. In spite of our dangerous position, I could not help laughing when I heard the sobs of the cowardly scaramouch. The helmsman was a man of great nerve, and, the gale being steady, I felt we would reach Corfu without mishap. At daybreak we sighted the town and at nine in the morning landed at Mandrachia. Everybody was surprised to see us arrive that way.

As soon as my company was landed, the young officers naturally came to inspect the actresses, but they did not find them very desirable, with the exception of Marina, who received uncomplainingly the news that I could not renew my acquaintance with her. I felt certain she would not lack admirers. But my actresses, who had appeared ugly at the landing, produced a very different effect on the stage, and particularly the pantaloons' wife. M. Duodo, commander of a man-of-war, called upon her and, finding her master pantaloons intolerant on the subject of his better half, gave him a few blows with his cane. Fastidio informed me the next day that the pantaloons and his wife refused to perform any more, but I made them alter their mind by giving them a benefit night.

The pantaloons' wife was much applauded, but she felt insulted because, in the midst of the applause, the pit called out, "Bravo Duodo!" She presented herself to the general in his own box, in which I was generally, and complained of the manner in which she was treated. The general promised her in my name another benefit night for the close of the carnival, and I was, of course, compelled to ratify his promise. The fact is that, to satisfy the greedy actors, I abandoned to my comedians, one by one, the seventeen nights I had reserved for myself. The benefit I gave to Marina was at the special request of Madame F—, who had taken her into great favour since she had had the honour of breakfasting alone with M. D— R— in a villa outside of the city.

My generosity cost me four hundred sequins, but the faro bank brought me a thousand and more, although I never held the cards, my management of the theatre taking up all my time. My manner with the actresses gained me great kindness; it was clearly seen that I carried on no intrigue with any of them, although I had every facility for doing so. Madame F— complimented me, saying that she had not entertained such a good opinion of my discretion. I was too busy through the carnival to think of love, even of the passion which filled my heart. It was only at the beginning of Lent and after the departure of the comedians that I could give rein to my feelings.

One morning Madame F— sent a messenger, who summoned me to

her presence. It was eleven o'clock; I immediately went to her and inquired what I could do for her service.

"I wanted to see you," she said, "to return the two hundred sequins which you lent me so nobly. Here they are; be good enough to give me back my note of hand."

"Your note of hand, madame, is no longer in my possession. I have deposited it in a sealed envelope with the notary, who, according to this receipt of his, can return it only to you."

"Why did you not keep it yourself?"

"Because I was afraid of losing it or having it stolen. And in the event of my death I did not want such a document to fall into any other hands but yours."

"A great proof of your extreme delicacy, certainly, but I think you ought to have reserved the right of taking it out of the notary's custody yourself."

"I did not foresee the possibility of calling for it myself."

"Yet it was a very likely thing. Then I can send word to the notary to transmit it to me?"

"Certainly, madame; you alone can claim it."

She sent to the notary, who brought the envelope himself.

She tore the envelope open and found only a piece of paper besmeared with ink, quite illegible, except her own name, which had not been touched.

"You have acted," she said, "most nobly; but you must agree with me that I cannot be certain that this piece of paper is really my note of hand, although I see my name on it."

"True, madame; and if you are not certain of it, I confess myself in the wrong."

"I must be certain of it, and I am so; but you must grant that I could not swear to it."

"Granted, madame."

During the following days it struck me that her manner towards me was singularly altered. She never received me in dishabille, and I had to wait with great patience until her maid had entirely dressed her before being admitted into her presence.

If I related any story, any adventure, she pretended not to understand and affected not to see the point of an anecdote or a jest; very often she would purposely not look at me, and then I was sure to relate badly. If M. D— R— laughed at something I had just said, she would ask what he was laughing for, and, when he had told her, she would say it was insipid or dull. If one of her bracelets became unfastened, I offered to fasten it again, but either she would not give me so much trouble or I did not understand the fastening, and the maid was called to do it. I could not help showing my vexation, but she did not seem to take the slightest notice of it. If M. D— R— urged me to say something amusing or witty and I did not speak immediately, she would say that my budget was empty, laughing and adding that the wit of poor M. Casanova was worn out. Full of rage,

I would plead guilty by my silence to her taunting accusation, but I was thoroughly miserable, for I did not see any cause for that extraordinary change in her feelings, being conscious that I had not given her any motive for it. I wanted to show her openly my indifference and contempt, but, whenever an opportunity offered, my courage would forsake me, and I would let it escape.

One evening M. D— R— asking me whether I had often been in love, I answered, "Three times, my lord."

"And always happily, of course."

"Always unhappily. The first time, perhaps, because, being an ecclesiastic, I durst not speak openly of my love. The second, because a cruel, unexpected event compelled me to leave the woman I loved at the very moment in which my happiness would have been complete. The third time, because the feeling of pity, with which I inspired the beloved object, induced her to cure me of my passion, instead of crowning my felicity."

"But what specific remedies did she use to effect your cure?"

"She ceased to be kind."

"I understand she treated you cruelly, and you call that pity, do you? You are mistaken."

"Certainly," said Madame F—, "a woman may pity the man she loves, but she would not think of ill-treating him to cure him of his passion. That woman never felt any love for you."

"I cannot, I will not believe it, madame."

"But you are cured?"

"Oh! thoroughly; for, when I happen to think of her, I feel nothing but indifference and coldness. But my recovery was slow."

"Your convalescence lasted, I suppose, until you fell in love with another?"

"With another, madame? I thought I had just told you that the third time I loved was the last."

A few days after that conversation M. D— R— told me that Madame F— was not well, that he could not keep her company and that I ought to go to her, as he was sure she would be glad to see me. I obeyed and told Madame F— what M. D— R— had said. She was lying on a sofa. Without looking at me, she told me she was feverish and would not ask me to remain with her because I would be wearied.

"I could not experience any weariness in your society, madame; at all events, I can leave you only by your express command, and, in that case, I must spend the next four hours in your ante-room, for M. D— R— has told me to wait for him here."

"If so, you may take a seat."

Her cold and distant manner repelled me, but I loved her and had never seen her so beautiful, a slight fever animating her complexion, which was then truly dazzling in its beauty. I remained where I was, dumb and as motionless as a statue, for a quarter of an hour. Then she rang for her maid and asked me to leave her alone for a moment.

I was called back soon after, and she said to me, "What has become of your cheerfulness?"

"If it has disappeared, madame, it can be only by your will. Call it back, and you will see it return in full force."

"What must I do to obtain that result?"

"Only be towards me as you were when I returned from Casopo. I have been disagreeable to you for the last four months, and, as I do not know why, I feel deeply grieved."

"I am always the same; in what do you find me changed?"

"Good heavens! In everything except beauty. But I have made my decision."

"And what is it?"

"To suffer in silence, without allowing any circumstance to alter the feelings with which you have inspired me; to wish ardently to convince you of my perfect obedience to your commands; to be ever ready to give you fresh proofs of my devotion."

"I thank you, but I cannot imagine what you can have to suffer in silence on my account. I take an interest in you and always listen with pleasure to your adventures. As a proof of it, I am extremely curious to hear the history of your three loves."

I invented on the spot three purely imaginary stories, making a great display of tender sentiments and of ardent love, but without alluding to amorous enjoyment, particularly when she seemed to expect me to do so. Sometimes delicacy, sometimes respect or duty interfered to prevent the crowning pleasure, and I took care to observe, at such moments of disappointment, that a true lover does not require that all-important item to feel perfectly happy. I could easily see that her imagination was travelling farther than my narrative and that my reserve was agreeable to her. I believed I knew her nature well enough to be certain that I was taking the best road to induce her to follow me where I wished to lead her. She expressed a sentiment which moved me deeply, but I was careful not to show it. We were talking of my third love, of the woman who, out of pity, had undertaken to cure me, and she remarked, "If she truly loved you, she may have wished not to cure you, but to cure herself."

On the day following this partial reconciliation, M. F—, her husband, begged my commanding officer, M. D— R—, to let me go with him to Butintro for an excursion of three days, his own adjutant being seriously ill.

Butintro is seven miles from Corfu, almost opposite to that city; it is the nearest point to the island from the mainland. It is not a fortress, but only a small village of Epirus—or Albania, as it is now called—belonging to the Venetians. Acting on the political axiom that "neglected right is lost right," the Republic sends every year four galleys to Butintro with a gang of galley slaves to fell trees, cut them and load them on the galleys, while the military keep a sharp lookout to prevent them from escaping to Turkey and becoming Mussulmans.

One of the four galleys was commanded by M. F—, who, wanting an adjutant for the occasion, chose me.

I went with him, and on the fourth day we came back to Corfu with a large provision of wood. I found M. D— R— alone on the terrace of his palace. It was Good Friday. He seemed thoughtful, and, after a silence of a few minutes he spoke the following words, which I can never forget:

"M. F—, whose adjutant died yesterday, has just been entreating me to give you to him until he can find another officer. I have told him that I had no right to dispose of your person and that he ought to apply to you, assuring him that, if you asked my leave to go with him, I would not raise any objection, although I require two adjutants. Has he not mentioned the matter to you?"

"No, monsignor, he has only tendered me his thanks for having accompanied him to Butintro, nothing else."

"He is sure to speak to you about it. What do you intend to say?"

"Simply that I will never leave the service of Your Excellency without your express command to do so."

"I never will give you such an order."

As M. D— R— was saying the last word, M. and Madame F— came in. Knowing that the conversation would most likely turn upon the subject which had just been broached, I hurried out of the room. In less than a quarter of an hour I was sent for, and M. F— said to me, confidentially, "Well, M. Casanova, would you not be willing to live with me as my adjutant?"

"Does His Excellency dismiss me from his service?"

"Not at all," observed M. D— R—, "but I leave you the choice."

"My lord, I could not be guilty of ingratitude."

And I remained there standing, uneasy, keeping my eyes on the ground, not even striving to conceal my mortification, which was, after all, very natural in such a position. I dreaded looking at Madame F—, for I knew that she could easily guess all my feelings. An instant after her foolish husband coldly remarked that I should certainly have a more fatiguing service with him than with M. D— R— and that, of course, it was more honourable to serve the general governor of the *galeazze* than a simple *sopra-comito*. I was on the point of answering when Madame F— said, in a graceful and easy manner, "M. Casanova is right," and changed the subject. I left the room, revolving in my mind all that had just taken place.

My conclusion was that M. F— had asked M. D— R— to let me go with him at the suggestion of his wife, or at least with her consent, and it was highly flattering to my love and my vanity. But I was bound in honour not to accept the post unless I had a perfect assurance that it would not be disagreeable to my present patron. "I will accept," I said to myself, "if M. D— R— tells me positively that I shall please him by doing so. It is for M. F— to make him say it."

On the same night I had the honour of offering my arm to Madame F— during the procession which takes place in commemoration of the

death of our Lord and Saviour, which was then attended on foot by all the nobility. I expected she would mention the matter, but she did not. My love was in despair, and through the night I could not close my eyes. I feared she had been offended by my refusal, and was overwhelmed with grief. I passed the whole of the next day without breaking my fast and did not utter a single word during the evening reception. I felt very unwell and had an attack of fever, which kept me in bed on Easter Sunday. I was very weak on the Monday and intended to remain in my room when a messenger from Madame F— came to inform me that she wished to see me. I told the messenger not to say that he had found me in bed, and, dressing myself rapidly, I hurried to her house. I entered her room, pale, looking very ill; yet she did not inquire after my health and kept silent a minute or two, as if she had been trying to recollect what she had to say to me.

"Ah, yes! you are aware that our adjutant is dead and that we want to replace him. My husband, who has a great esteem for you and feels that M. D— R— leaves you perfectly free to make your choice, has taken the singular fancy that you will come if I ask you myself to do us that pleasure. Is he mistaken? If you should come with us, you would have that room."

She was pointing to a room adjoining the chamber in which she slept and so situated that, to see her in every part of her room, I should not even require to place myself at the window.

"M. D— R—," she continued, "will not love you less, and, as he will see you here every day, he will not be likely to forget his interest in your welfare. Now tell me, will you come or not?"

"I wish I could, madame, but indeed I cannot."

"You cannot? That is singular. Take a seat and tell me what there is to prevent you when, in accepting my offer, you are sure to please M. D— R— as well as us."

"If I were certain of it, I would accept immediately; but all I have heard from his lips was that he left me free to make a choice."

"Then you are afraid to grieve him if you come to us?"

"It might be, and for nothing on earth—"

"I am certain of the contrary."

"Will you be so good as to obtain that he says so to me himself?"

"And then you will come?"

"Oh, madame! that very minute!"

But the warmth of my exclamation might mean a great deal, and I turned my head round so as not to embarrass her. She asked me to give her her mantle to go to church, and we went out. As we were going down the stairs, she placed her ungloved hand upon mine. It was the first time that she had granted me such a favour, and it seemed to me a good omen. She took her hand away, asking whether I was feverish. "Your hand," she said, "is burning."

When we left the church, M. D— R—'s carriage happened to pass, and I assisted her to get in and, as soon as she had gone, hurried to my room in order to breathe freely and enjoy all the felicity which filled my

soul; for I no longer doubted her love for me and I knew that, in this case, M. D— R— was not likely to refuse her anything.

What is love? I have read plenty of ancient verbiage on that subject, I have read likewise most of what has been said by modern writers, but neither all that has been said nor what I have thought about it when I was young and now that I am no longer so, nothing, in fact, can make me agree that love is a trifling vanity. It is a sort of madness, I grant that, but a madness over which philosophy is entirely powerless; it is a disease to which man is exposed at all times, no matter at what age, and which cannot be cured if he is attacked by it in his old age. Love!—a creature, a sentiment which cannot be explained! God of all nature!—bitter and sweet feeling! Love!—charming mystery which cannot be fathomed! A God who, in the midst of all the thorns with which thou plaguest us, strewest so many roses on our path that, but for thee, existence and death would be united and blended together!

Two days afterwards M. D— R— told me to go and take orders from M. F— on board his galley, which was ready for a five or six days' voyage. I quickly packed a few things and called for my new patron, who received me with great joy. We took our departure without seeing madame, who was not yet visible. We returned on the sixth day, and I went to establish myself in my new home, for, as I was preparing to go to M. D— R— to take his orders after our landing, he came himself and, after asking M. F— and me whether we were pleased with each other, said to me, "Casanova, as you suit each other so well, you may be certain that you will greatly please me by remaining in the service of M. F—."

I obeyed respectfully and in less than one hour had taken possession of my new quarters. Madame F— told me how delighted she was to see that great affair ended according to her wishes, and I answered with a deep reverence.

I found myself, like the salamander, in the very heart of the fire for which I had been longing so ardently.

I was almost constantly in the presence of Madame F—, dining often alone with her, accompanying her in her walks, even when M. D— R— was not with us, seeing her from my room or conversing with her in her chamber, always reserved and attentive without pretension. The first night passed by without any change being brought about by that constant intercourse. Yet I was full of hope and, to keep up my courage, imagined that love was not yet powerful enough to conquer her pride. I expected everything from some lucky chance, which I promised myself to improve as soon as it should present itself, for I was persuaded that a lover is lost if he does not catch fortune by the forelock.

But there was one circumstance which annoyed me: in public, she seized every opportunity of treating me with distinction, while, when we were alone, it was exactly the reverse. In the eyes of the world I had all the appearance of a happy lover, but I would rather have had less of the appearance of happiness and more of the reality. My love for her was disinterested; vanity had no share in my feelings.

One day, being alone with me, she said, "You have enemies, but I silenced them last night."

"They are envious, madame, and they would pity me if they could read the secret pages of my heart. You could easily deliver me from those enemies."

"How can you be an object of pity for them, and how could I deliver you from them?"

"They believe me happy, and I am miserable; you would deliver me from them by ill-treating me in their presence."

"Then you would feel my bad treatment less than the envy of the wicked?"

"Yes, madame, provided your bad treatment in public were compensated by your kindness when we are alone, for there is no vanity in the happiness I feel in belonging to you. Let others pity me; I will be happy on condition that others are mistaken."

"That's a part I can never play."

I would often be indiscreet enough to remain behind the curtain of the window in my room, looking at her when she thought herself perfectly certain that nobody saw her; but the liberty I was thus guilty of never proved of great advantage to me; whether it was because she doubted my discretion or from habitual reserve, she was so particular that, even when I saw her in bed, my longing eyes never could obtain a sight of anything but her head.

One day, being present in her room while her maid was cutting off the points of her long and beautiful hair, I amused myself in picking up all those pretty bits and put them all, one after the other, on her toilet-table, with the exception of one small lock, which I slipped into my pocket, thinking that she had not taken any notice of my keeping it; but the moment we were alone, she told me quietly, but rather too seriously, to take out of my pocket the hair I had picked up from the floor. Thinking she was going too far and such rigour appearing to me as cruel as it was unjust and absurd, I obeyed, but threw the hair on the toilet-table with an air of supreme contempt.

"Sir, you forget yourself."

"No, madame, I do not; for you might have feigned not to have observed such an innocent theft."

"Feigning is tiresome."

"Was such petty larceny a very great crime?"

"No crime, but it was an indication of feelings which you have no right to entertain for me."

"Feelings which you are at liberty not to return, madame, but which hatred or pride can alone forbid my heart to experience. If you had a heart, you would not be the victim of either of those two fearful passions, but you have only a head—and it must be a very wicked head, judging by the care it takes to heap humiliation upon me. You have surprised my secret, madame, you may use it as you think proper, but in the meantime I have learned to know you thoroughly. That knowl-

edge will prove more useful than your discovery, for perhaps it will help me to become wiser."

After this violent tirade I left her, and, as she did not call me back, I retired to my room. In the hope that sleep would bring calm, I undressed and went to bed. In such moments a lover hates the object of his love, and his heart distills only contempt and hatred. I could not go to sleep, and, when I was sent for at supper-time, I answered that I was ill. The night passed off without my eyes being visited by sleep, and, feeling weak and low, I thought I would wait to see what ailed me, and refused to have my dinner, sending word that I was still very unwell. Towards evening I felt my heart leap for joy when I heard my beautiful lady-love enter my room. Anxiety and want of food and sleep gave me truly the appearance of being ill, and I was delighted that it should be so. I sent her away very soon by telling her with perfect indifference that it was nothing but a bad headache, to which I was subject, and that repose and diet would effect a speedy cure.

But at eleven o'clock she came back with her friend, M. D— R—, and, coming to my bed she said affectionately, "What ails you, my poor Casanova?"

"A very bad headache, madame, which will be cured to-morrow."

"Why should you wait until to-morrow? You must get better at once. I have ordered a basin of broth and two new-laid eggs for you."

"Nothing, madame; complete abstinence alone can cure me."

"He is right," said M. D— R—. "I know those attacks."

I shook my head slightly. M. D— R— having just then turned round to examine an engraving, she took my hand, saying that she would like me to drink some broth, and I felt that she was giving me a small parcel. She went to look at the engraving with M. D— R—.

I opened the parcel, but, feeling that it contained hair, hurriedly concealed it under the bedclothes; at the same moment the blood rushed to my head with such violence that it actually frightened me. I begged for some water, she came to me with M. D— R—, and they were both frightened to see me so red when they had seen me pale and weak only one minute before. Madame F— gave me a glass of water in which she put some *Eau des Carmes*, which instantly acted as a violent emetic. Two or three minutes after I felt better and asked for something to eat. Madame F— smiled. The servant came in with the broth and the eggs, and, while I was eating, I told the story of Pandolfin. M. D— R— thought it was all a miracle, and I could read on the countenance of the charming woman love, affection and repentance. If M. D— R— had not been present, it would have been the moment of my happiness, but I felt certain that I should not have long to wait. M. D— R— told Madame F— that, if he had not seen me so sick, he would have believed my illness to be all sham, for he did not think it possible for anyone to rally so rapidly.

"It is all owing to my *Eau des Carmes*," said Madame F—, looking at me, "and I will leave you my bottle."

"No, madame, be kind enough to take it with you, for the water would have no virtue without your presence."

"I am sure of that," said M. D— R—, "so I will leave you here with your patient."

"No, no, he must go to sleep now."

I slept all night, but in my happy dreams I was with her, and the reality itself would hardly have procured me greater enjoyment than I had during my happy slumbers. I saw I had taken a very long stride forward, for twenty-four hours of abstinence gave me the right to speak to her openly of my love and the gift of her hair was an irrefutable confession of her own feelings.

On the following day, after presenting myself before M. F—, I went to have a little chat with the maid, to wait until her mistress was visible, which was not long, and I had the pleasure of hearing her laugh when the maid told her I was there. As soon as I went in, without giving me time to say a single word, she told me how delighted she was to see me looking so well and advised me to call upon M. D— R—.

It is not only in the eyes of a lover, but also in those of every man of taste, that a woman is a thousand times more lovely at the moment she comes out of the arms of Morpheus than when she has completed her toilette. Around Madame F— more brilliant beams were blazing than around the sun when he leaves the embrace of Aurora. Yet the most beautiful woman thinks as much of her toilette as the one who cannot do without it; very likely because, the more human creatures possess, the more they want.

In the order given to me by Madame F— to call on M. D— R—, I saw another reason to be certain of approaching happiness, for I thought that, by dismissing me so quickly, she had only tried to postpone the consummation which I might have pressed upon her and which she could not have refused.

Rich in the possession of her hair, I held a consultation with my love to decide what I ought to do with it, for Madame F—, very likely in her wish to atone for the miserly sentiment which had refused me a small bit, had given me a splendid lock, full a yard and a half long. Having thought it over, I called upon a Jewish confectioner whose daughter was a skilful embroiderer, and I made her embroider before me on a bracelet of green satin the four initials of our names and make a very thin chain with the remainder. I had a piece of black ribbon added to one end of the chain in the shape of a sliding noose, with which I could easily strangle myself if ever love should reduce me to despair, and I passed it round my neck. As I did not want to lose even the smallest particle of so precious a treasure, I cut with a pair of scissors all the small bits which were left and devoutly gathered them together. Then I reduced them into a fine powder and ordered the Jewish confectioner to mix the powder in my presence with a paste made of amber, sugar, vanilla, angelica, alkermes and storax, and I waited until the comfits prepared with that mixture were ready. I had some more made with the same composition, but without any hair; I put the first

in a beautiful sweetmeat box of fine crystal and the second in a tortoise-shell box.

From the day when, by giving me her hair, Madame F— had betrayed the secret feelings of her heart, I no longer wasted my time in relating stories or adventures; I spoke to her only of my love, of my ardent desires; I told her that she must either banish me from her presence or crown my happiness, but the cruel, charming woman would not accept that alternative. She answered that happiness could not be obtained by offending every moral law and swerving from our duties. If I threw myself at her feet to obtain by anticipation her forgiveness for the loving violence I intended to use against her, she would repulse me more powerfully than if she had had the strength of a female Hercules, for she would say in a voice full of sweetness and affection, "My friend, I do not entreat you to respect my weakness, but be generous enough to spare me for the sake of all the love I feel for you."

"What! you love me, and you refuse to make me happy! It is impossible! It is unnatural! You compel me to believe that you do not love me. Only allow me to press my lips one moment upon your lips, and I ask no more."

"No, dearest, no; it would only excite the ardour of your desires and shake my resolution, and we should then find ourselves more miserable than we are now."

Thus did she every day plunge me into despair, and yet she complained that my wit was no longer brilliant in society, that I had lost that elasticity of spirits which had pleased her so much after my arrival from Constantinople. M. D— R—, who often jestingly waged war against me, used to say that I was getting thinner and thinner every day. Madame F— told me one day that my sickly looks were very disagreeable to her because wicked tongues would not fail to say that she was treating me with cruelty. Strange, almost unnatural thought! On it I composed an idyll which I cannot read, even now, without feeling tears in my eyes.

"What!" I answered, "you acknowledge your cruelty towards me! You are afraid of the world guessing all your heartless rigour, and yet you continue to enjoy it! You condemn me unmercifully to the torments of Tantalus! You would be delighted to see me gay, cheerful, happy, even at the expense of a judgment by which the world would find you guilty of a supposed but false kindness towards me, and yet you refuse me even the slightest favours!"

"I do not mind people believing anything, provided it is not true."

"What a contrast! Would it be possible for me not to love you, for you to feel nothing for me? Such contradictions strike me as unnatural. But you are growing thinner yourself, and I am dying. It must be so; we shall both die before long, you of consumption, I of exhausting decline; for I am now reduced to enjoying your shadow during the day, during the night, always, everywhere, except when I am in your presence."

At that passionate declaration, delivered with all the ardour of an

excited lover, she was surprised, deeply moved, and I thought that the happy hour had struck. I folded her in my arms and was already tasting the first fruits of enjoyment . . . The sentinel knocked twice! . . . Oh! fatal mischance. I recovered my composure and stood in front of her . . . M. D— R— made his appearance and this time found me in so cheerful a mood that he remained with us until one o'clock in the morning.

My comfits were beginning to be the talk of our society. M. D— R—, Madame F— and I were the only ones who had a box full of them. I was stingy with them, and no one durst beg any from me, because I had said that they were very expensive and that in all Corfu there was no confectioner who could make or physician who could analyse them. I never gave one out of my crystal box, and Madame F— remarked it. I certainly did not believe them to be an amorous philtre and was very far from supposing that the addition of the hair made them taste more delicious; but a superstition, the offspring of my love, caused me to cherish them, and it made me happy to think that a small portion of the woman I worshipped was thus becoming a part of my being.

Influenced perhaps by some secret sympathy, Madame F— was exceedingly fond of the comfits. She asserted before all her friends that they were the universal panacea, and, knowing herself perfect mistress of the inventor, she did not inquire after the secret of the composition. But, having observed that I gave away only the comfits which I kept in my tortoise-shell box and that I never ate any but those from the crystal box, she one day asked me what reason I had for that. Without taking time to think, I told her that in those I kept for myself there was a certain ingredient which made the partaker love her.

"I do not believe it," she answered. "But are they different from those I eat myself?"

"They are exactly the same, with the exception of the ingredient I have just mentioned, which has been put only in mine."

"Tell me what the ingredient is."

"It is a secret which I cannot reveal to you."

"Then I will never eat any of your comfits."

Saying which, she rose, emptied her box and filled it again with chocolate drops; and for the next few days she was angry with me and avoided my company. I felt grieved, I became low-spirited, but I could not make up my mind to tell her that I was eating her hair!

She inquired why I looked so sad.

"Because you refuse to take my comfits."

"You are master of your secret, and I am mistress of my diet."

"That is my reward for having taken you into my confidence."

And I opened my box, emptied its contents in my hand and swallowed the whole of them, saying, "Two more doses like this, and I shall die mad with love for you. Then you will be revenged for my reserve. Farewell, madame."

She called me back, made me take a seat near her and told me not to commit follies which would make her unhappy, that I knew how much she loved me and that it was not owing to the effect of any drug. "To

prove to you," she added, "that you do not require anything of the sort to be loved, here is a token of my affection." And she offered me her lovely lips, and upon them mine remained pressed until I was compelled to draw a breath. I threw myself at her feet with tears of love and gratitude blinding my eyes and told her that I would confess my crime if she would promise to forgive me.

"Your crime! You frighten me. Yes, I forgive you, but speak quickly and tell me all."

"Yes, everything. My comfits contain your hair reduced to powder. Here on my arm see this bracelet on which our names are written with your hair, and round my neck this chain of the same material, which will help me to destroy my own life when your love fails me. Such is my crime, but I would not have been guilty of it if I had not loved you."

She smiled and, bidding me rise from my kneeling position, told me that I was indeed the most criminal of men, and she wiped away my tears, assuring me that I should never have any reason to strangle myself with the chain.

After that conversation, in which I had enjoyed the sweet nectar of my divinity's first kiss, I had the courage to behave in a very different manner. She could see the ardour which consumed me; perhaps the same fire burned in her veins, but I abstained from any attack.

"What gives you," she said one day, "the strength to control yourself?"

"After the kiss which you granted to me of your own accord, I felt that I ought not to wish for any favour unless your heart gave it as freely. You cannot imagine the happiness that kiss has given me."

"I not imagine it, you ungrateful man! Which of us gave that happiness?"

"Neither you nor I, angel of my soul! That kiss so tender, so sweet, was the child of love!"

"Yes, dearest, of love, the treasures of which are inexhaustible."

The words were scarcely spoken when our lips were engaged in happy concert. She held me so tight against her bosom that I could not use my hands to secure other pleasures, but I felt myself perfectly happy. After that delightful skirmish, I asked her whether we were never to go any further.

"Never, dearest friend, never. Love is a child which must be amused with trifles; too substantial food would kill it."

"I know love better than you; it requires that substantial food and, unless it can obtain it, dies of exhaustion. Do not refuse me the consolation of hope."

"Hope as much as you please if it makes you happy."

"What should I do if I had no hope? I hope because I know you have a heart."

that I had only a head, but no heart, thinking you were insulting me

"Ah! yes. Do you recollect the day when in your anger you told me grossly?"

"Oh! yes, I recollect it."

"How heartily I laughed when I had time to think! Yes, dearest, I have a heart, or I should not feel as happy as I feel now. Let us keep our happiness and be satisfied with it as it is, without wishing for anything more."

Obedient to her wishes but every day more deeply enamoured, I was in hope that nature at last would prove stronger than prejudice and would cause a fortunate crisis. But besides nature Fortune was my friend, and I owed my happiness to an accident.

Madame F— was walking one day in the garden, leaning on M. D— R—'s arm, and was caught by a large rosebush, and the prickly thorns left a deep cut on her leg. M. D— R— bandaged the wound with his handkerchief, so as to stop the blood which was flowing abundantly, and she had to be carried home in a palanquin.

In Corfu wounds on the legs are dangerous when they are not well attended to, and very often the wounded are compelled to leave the city to be cured.

Madame F— was confined to her bed, and my lucky position in the house condemned me to remain constantly at her orders. I saw her every minute; but during the first three days visitors succeeded each other without intermission, and I never was alone with her. In the evening, after everybody had gone and her husband had retired to his own apartment, M. D— R— remained another hour, and for the sake of propriety I had to take my leave at the same time that he did. I had much more liberty before the accident, and I told her so half seriously, half jestingly. The next day, to make up for my disappointment, she contrived a moment of happiness for me.

An elderly surgeon came every morning to dress her wound, during which operation her maid only was present, but I used to go in my morning dishabille to the maid's room and wait there, so as to be the first to hear how my dear one was.

That morning the girl came to tell me to go in as the surgeon was dressing the wound.

"See whether my leg is less inflamed."

"To give an opinion, madame, I ought to have seen it yesterday."

"True. I feel great pain, and I am afraid of erysipelas."

"Do not be afraid, madame," said the surgeon, "keep your bed, and I answer for your complete recovery."

The surgeon being busy preparing a poultice at the other end of the room, and the maid out, I inquired whether she felt any hardness in the calf of the leg and whether the inflammation went up the limb; and naturally, my eyes and my hands kept pace with my questions . . . I saw no inflammation, I felt no hardness, but . . . and the lovely patient hurriedly let the curtain fall, smiling and allowing me to take a sweet kiss, the perfume of which I had not enjoyed for many days. It was a sweet moment, a delicious ecstasy. From her mouth my lips descended to her wound, and, satisfied in that moment that my kisses were the best of medicines, I would have kept my lips there if the noise made by the

maid coming back had not compelled me to give up my delightful occupation.

When we were left alone, burning with intense desires, I entreated her to grant happiness at least to my eyes.

"I feel humiliated," I said to her, "by the thought that the felicity I have just enjoyed was only a theft."

"But supposing you were mistaken?"

The next day I was again present at the dressing of the wound, and, as soon as the surgeon had left, she asked me to arrange her pillows, which I did at once. As if to make that pleasant office easier, she raised the bed-clothes to support herself, and she thus gave me a sight of beauties which intoxicated my eyes, and I protracted the easy operation without her complaining of my being too slow.

When I had done, I was in a fearful state and threw myself in an armchair opposite her bed, half dead, in a sort of trance. I was looking at that lovely being who, almost artlessly, was continually granting me greater and still greater favours and yet never allowed me to reach the goal for which I was so ardently longing.

"What are you thinking?" she said.

"Of the supreme felicity I have just been enjoying."

"You are a cruel man."

"No, I am not cruel, for, if you love me, you must not blush for your indulgence. You must know, too, that, loving you passionately, I must not suppose that it is to a surprise that I am indebted for my happiness in the enjoyment of the most ravishing sights, for, if I owed it only to mere chance I should be compelled to believe that any other man in my position might have had the same happiness, and such an idea would be misery to me. Let me be indebted to you for having proved to me this morning how much enjoyment I can derive from one of my senses. Can you be angry with my eyes?"

"Yes."

"They belong to you; tear them out."

The next day, the moment the doctor had gone, she sent her maid out to make some purchases.

"Ah!" she said, a few minutes after, "my maid has forgotten to change my chemise."

"Allow me to take her place."

"Very well, but recollect that I give permission only to your eyes to take a share in the proceedings."

"Agreed!"

She unlaced herself, took off her stays and her chemise and told me to be quick and put on the clean one, but I was not speedy enough, being too much engaged by all I could see.

"Give me my chemise," she exclaimed. "It is there on that small table."

"Where?"

"There, near the bed. Well, I will get it myself."

She leaned over towards the table and exposed almost everything I

was longing for and, turning slowly round, handed me the chemise, which I could hardly hold, trembling all over with fearful excitement. I fell into her arms, our lips fastened together, and, in a voluptuous, ardent pressure, we enjoyed an amorous exhaustion not sufficient to allay our desires, but delightful enough to deceive them for the moment.

CHAPTER 16

THE wound was rapidly healing, and I saw near at hand the moment when Madame F— would leave her bed and resume her usual avocations.

The governor of the galleasses having issued orders for a general review at Gouyn, M. F— left for that place in his galley, telling me to join him there early on the following day with the felucca. I took supper alone with Madame F— and told her how unhappy it made me to remain one day away from her.

"Let us make up to-night for to-morrow's disappointment," she said, "and let us spend it together in conversation. Here are the keys; when you know that my maid has left me, come to me through my husband's room."

I did not fail to follow her instructions to the letter, and we found ourselves alone with five hours before us. It was the month of June, and the heat was intense. She had gone to bed; I folded her in my arms, she pressed me to her bosom, but, condemning herself to the most cruel torture, she thought I had no right to complain if I was subjected to the same privation which she imposed upon herself. My remonstrances, my prayers, my entreaties were of no avail.

"Love," she said, "must be kept in check with a tight hand, and we can laugh at him, since, in spite of the tyranny which we force him to obey, we succeed all the same in gratifying our desires."

After the first ecstasy, our eyes and lips unclosed together, and, a little apart from each other, we take delight in seeing the mutual satisfaction beaming on our features.

Our desires revive; she casts a look upon my state of innocence entirely exposed to her sight. She seems vexed at my want of excitement, and, throwing off everything which makes the heat unpleasant and interferes with our pleasure, she bounds upon me. It is more than amorous fury, it is desperate lust. . . . But, at the very moment of completing the offering, she foils me, moves off, slips away.

"Ah, thou cruel, beloved woman!"

While I was speaking thus, her very soul was breathing forth the most tender sighs of happiness, and, as she pressed me tightly in her arms, I felt that she was weltering in an ocean of bliss.

Silence lasted rather a long time, but that unnatural felicity was imperfect and increased my excitement.

"How canst thou complain," she said tenderly, "when it is to that very imperfection of our enjoyment that we are indebted for its con-

tinuance? I loved thee a few minutes since, now I love thee a thousand times more, and, perhaps I should love thee less if thou hadst carried my enjoyment to its highest limit."

"Oh! how much art thou mistaken, lovely one! How great is thy error! Thou art feeding upon sophisms, and thou leavest reality aside: I mean nature which alone can give real felicity. Desires constantly renewed and never fully satisfied are more terrible than the torments of hell."

"But are not those desires happiness when they are always accompanied by hope?"

"No, if that hope is always disappointed. It becomes hell itself because there is no hope, and hope must die when it is killed by constant disappointment."

"Dearest, if hope does not exist in hell, desires cannot be found there either; for to imagine desires without hopes would be more than madness."

"Well, answer me. If you desire to be mine entirely and if you feel the hope of it which, according to your way of reasoning, is a natural consequence, why do you always raise an impediment to your own hope? Cease, dearest, cease to deceive yourself by absurd sophisms. Let us be as happy as it is in nature to be, and be quite certain that the reality of happiness will increase our love and that love will find a new life in our very enjoyment."

"What I see proves the contrary; you are alive with excitement now, but, if your desires had been entirely satisfied, you would be dead, benumbed, motionless. I know it by experience; if you had breathed the full ecstasy of enjoyment, as you desired, you would have found a weak ardour only at long intervals."

"Ah! charming creature, your experience is but very small; do not trust to it. I see that you have never known love. That which you call love's grave is the sanctuary in which it receives life, the abode which makes it immortal. Give way to my prayers, my lovely friend, and then you shall know the difference between Love and Hymen. You shall see that, if Hymen likes to die in order to get rid of life, Love on the contrary expires only to spring up again into existence and hastens to revive, so as to savour new enjoyment. Let me undeceive you, and believe me when I say that the full gratification of desires can only increase a hundredfold the mutual ardour of two beings who adore each other."

"Well, I must believe you; but let us wait. In the meantime let us enjoy all the trifles, all the sweet preliminaries of love. Devour thy mistress, dearest, but abandon to me all thy being. If this night is too short, we must console ourselves to-morrow by making arrangements for another one."

"And if our intercourse should be discovered?"

"Do we make a mystery of it? Everybody can see that we love each other, and those who think that we do not enjoy the happiness of lovers are precisely the only persons we have to fear. We must only be careful

to guard against being surprised in the very act of proving our love. Heaven and nature must protect our affection, for there is no crime when two hearts are blended in true love. Since I have been conscious of my own existence, Love has always seemed to me the god of my being, for every time I saw a man I was delighted, I thought that I was looking upon one-half of myself because I felt I was made for him and he for me. I longed to be married. It was that uncertain longing of the heart which occupies exclusively a young girl of fifteen. I had no conception of love, but fancied that it naturally accompanied marriage. You can therefore imagine my surprise when my husband, in the very act of making a woman of me, gave me a great deal of pain without giving me the slightest idea of pleasure! My imagination in the convent was much better than the reality I had been condemned to by my husband! The result has naturally been that we have become very good friends, but a very indifferent husband and wife, without any desires for each other. He has every reason to be pleased with me, for I always show myself docile to his wishes, but enjoyment not being in those cases seasoned by love, he must find it without flavour and he seldom comes to me for it.

"When I found out that you were in love with me, I felt delighted and gave you every opportunity of becoming every day more deeply enamoured of me, thinking myself certain of never loving you myself. As soon as I felt that love had likewise attacked my heart, I ill-treated you, to punish you for having made my heart responsive to love. Your patience and constancy have astonished me and have caused me to be guilty, for, after the first kiss I gave you, I had no longer any control over myself. I was indeed astounded when I saw the havoc made by one single kiss, and I felt that my happiness was wrapped up in yours. That discovery flattered and delighted me, and I have found out, particularly to-night, that I cannot be happy unless you are so yourself."

"That is, my beloved, the most refined of all sentiments experienced by love, but it is impossible for you to render me completely happy without following in everything the laws and wishes of nature."

The night was spent in tender discussions and in exquisite voluptuousness, and it was not without some grief that at daybreak I tore myself from her arms to go to Gouyn. She wept for joy when she saw that I left her without having lost a particle of my vigour, for she did not imagine such a thing possible.

After that night, so rich in delights, ten or twelve days passed without giving us any opportunity of quenching even a small particle of the amorous thirst which devoured us, and it was then that a fearful misfortune befell me.

One evening after supper, M. D— R— having retired, M. F— used no ceremony and, although I was present, told his wife that he intended to pay her a visit after writing two letters which he had to dispatch early the next morning. The moment he had left the room we looked at each other and with one accord fell into each other's

arms. A torrent of delights rushed through our souls without restraint, without reserve, but, when the first ardour had been appeased, without giving me time to think or to enjoy the most complete, the most delicious victory, she drew back, repulsed me and threw herself, panting, distracted, upon a chair near her bed. Rooted to the spot, astonished, almost mad, I tremblingly looked at her, trying to understand what had caused such an extraordinary action. She turned around towards me and said, her eyes flashing with the fire of love, "My darling, we were on the brink of the precipice."

"The precipice! Ah! cruel woman, you have killed me; I feel myself dying, and perhaps you will never see me again."

I left her in a state of frenzy and rushed out, towards the esplanade, to cool myself, for I was choking. Any man who has not experienced the cruelty of an action like that of Madame F—, and especially in the situation I found myself in at that moment, mentally and bodily, can hardly realise what I suffered, and, although I have felt that suffering, I could not give an idea of it.

I was in that fearful state when I heard my name called from a window, and unfortunately I condescended to answer. I went near the window and saw, thanks to the moonlight, the famous Melulla standing on her balcony.

"What are you doing there at this time of night?" I inquired.

"I am enjoying the cool evening breeze. Come up for a little while."

This Melulla, of fatal memory, was a courtesan from Zante of rare beauty, who for the last four months had been the delight and the rage of all the young men in Corfu. Those who had known her agreed in extolling her charms; she was the talk of all the city. I had seen her often, but, although she was very beautiful, I was very far from thinking her as lovely as Madame F—, even putting my affection for the latter on one side. I recollect seeing in Dresden in the year 1790 a very handsome woman who was the image of Melulla.

I went upstairs mechanically, and she took me to a voluptuous boudoir; she complained of my being the only one who had never paid her a visit, when I was the man she would have preferred to all others, and I had the infamy to give way . . . I became the most criminal of men.

It was neither desire nor imagination nor the merit of the woman which caused me to yield, for Melulla was in no way worthy of me; no, it was weakness, indolence and the state of bodily and mental irritation in which I then found myself; it was a sort of spite, because the angel whom I adored had displeased me by a caprice, which, had I not been unworthy of her, would only have caused me to be still more attached to her.

Melulla, highly pleased with her success, refused the gold I wanted to give her, and allowed me to go after I had spent two hours with her.

When I recovered my composure, I had but one feeling—hatred for myself and for the contemptible creature who had allured me to be guilty of so vile an insult to the loveliest of her sex. I went home,

the prey to fearful remorse, and went to bed, but sleep never closed my eyes throughout that cruel night.

In the morning, worn out with fatigue and sorrow, I got up and, as soon as I was dressed, went to M. F—, who had sent for me to give me some orders. After I had returned and had given him an account of my mission, I called upon Madame F—, and, finding her at her toilette I wished her "good morning," observing that her lovely face was breathing the cheerfulness and calm of happiness; but, suddenly, her eyes meeting mine, I saw her countenance change and an expression of sadness replace her looks of satisfaction. She cast her eyes down as if she were deep in thought, raised them again as if to read my very soul, and, breaking our painful silence as soon as she had dismissed her maid, she said to me, with an accent full of tenderness and of solemnity:

"Dear one, let there be no concealment either on my part or on yours. I felt deeply grieved when I saw you leave me last night, and a little consideration made me understand all the evil which might accrue to you in consequence of what I had done. With a nature like yours, such scenes might cause very dangerous disorders, and I have resolved not to do anything again by halves. I thought that you went out to breathe the fresh air, and I hoped it would do you good. I placed myself at my window, where I remained more than an hour without seeing a light in your room. Sorry for what I had done, loving you more than ever, I was compelled, when my husband came to my room, to go to bed with the sad conviction that you had not come home. This morning M. F— sent an officer to tell you that he wanted to see you, and I heard the messenger inform him that you were not yet up and that you had come home very late. I felt my heart swell with sorrow. I am not jealous, dearest, for I know that you cannot love anyone but me; I only felt afraid of some misfortune. At last this morning, when I heard you coming, I was happy because I was ready to show my repentance, but I looked at you, and you seemed a different man. Now I am still looking at you, and, in spite of myself, my soul reads upon your countenance that you are guilty, that you have outraged my love. Tell me at once, dearest, if I am mistaken; if you have deceived me, say so openly. Do not be unfaithful to love and to truth. Knowing that I was the cause of it, I should never forgive myself, but there is an excuse for you in my heart, in my whole being."

More than once in the course of my life I have found myself under the painful necessity of telling falsehoods to the woman I loved; but in this case, after so true, so touching an appeal, how could I be otherwise than sincere? I felt myself sufficiently debased by my crime, and I could not degrade myself still more by falsehood. I was so far from being disposed to such a line of conduct that I could not speak, and I burst out crying.

"What, my darling! you are weeping! Your tears make me miserable. You ought not to have shed any with me but tears of happiness and love. Quick, my beloved, tell me whether you have made me

wretched. Tell me what fearful revenge you have taken on me, who would rather die than offend you. If I have caused you any sorrow, it has been in the innocence of a loving and devoted heart."

"My own darling angel, I never thought of revenge, for my heart, which can never cease to adore you, could never conceive such a dreadful idea. It is against my own heart that my cowardly weakness has allured me to the commission of a crime which, for the remainder of my life, makes me unworthy of you."

"Did you, then, give yourself to some wretched woman?"

"Yes, I spent two hours in the vilest debauchery, and my soul was present only to be the witness of my sadness, of my remorse, of my unworthiness."

"Sadness and remorse! Oh, my poor friend! I believe it. But it is my fault; I alone ought to suffer; it is I who must beg you to forgive."

Her tears made mine flow again.

"Divine soul," I said, "the reproaches you are addressing to yourself increase twofold the gravity of my crime. You would never have been guilty of any wrong against me if I had been really worthy of your love."

I felt deeply the truth of my words.

We spent the remainder of the day apparently quiet and composed, concealing our sadness in the depths of our hearts. She was curious to know all the circumstances of my miserable adventure, and, accepting it as an expiation, I related them to her. Full of kindness, she assured me that we were bound to ascribe that accident to fate and that the same thing might have happened to the best of men. She added that I was more to be pitied than condemned and that she did not love me less. We both were certain that we would seize the first favourable opportunity, she of obtaining her pardon, I of atoning for my crime, by giving each other new and complete proofs of our mutual ardour. But Heaven in its justice had ordered differently, and I was cruelly punished for my disgusting debauchery.

On the third day, as I got up in the morning, an awful pricking announced the horrid state into which the wretched Melulla had thrown me. I was thunderstruck! And when I came to think of the misery which I might have caused if, during the preceding three days, I had obtained some new favour from my lovely mistress, I was on the point of going mad. What would have been her feelings if I had made her unhappy for the remainder of her life! Would anyone, then, knowing the whole case, have condemned me if I had destroyed my own life in order to deliver myself from everlasting remorse? No, for the man who kills himself from sheer despair, thus performing upon himself the execution of the sentence he would have deserved at the hands of justice, cannot be blamed either by a virtuous philosopher or by a tolerant Christian. But of one thing I am quite certain: if such a misfortune had happened, I should have committed suicide.

Overwhelmed with grief by the discovery I had just made, but thinking that I should get rid of the inconvenience as I had done three

times before, I prepared myself for a strict diet, which would restore my health in six weeks without anyone having any suspicion of my illness, but I soon found out that I had not seen the end of my troubles; Melulla had communicated to my system all the poisons which corrupt the source of life. I was acquainted with an elderly doctor of great experience in those matters; I consulted him, and he promised to set me to rights in two months. He proved as good as his word. At the beginning of September I found myself in good health, and it was about that time that I returned to Venice.

The first thing I resolved on, as soon as I discovered the state I was in, was to confess everything to Madame F—. I did not wish to wait for the time when a compulsory confession would make her blush for her weakness and give her cause to think of the fearful consequences which might have been the result of her passion for me. Her affection was too dear to me to run the risk of losing it through a want of confidence in her. Knowing her heart, her candour and the generosity which had prompted her to say that I was more to be pitied than blamed, I thought myself bound to prove by my sincerity that I deserved her esteem.

I told her candidly my position and the state I had been thrown in when I thought of the dreadful consequences it might have had for her. I saw her shudder and tremble, and she turned pale with fear when I added that I would have avenged her by killing myself.

"Villainous, infamous Melulla!" she exclaimed.

And I repeated those words, but turned them against myself when I realised all I had sacrificed through the most disgusting weakness.

Everyone in Corfu knew of my visit to the wretched Melulla, and everyone seemed surprised to see the appearance of health on my countenance; for many were the victims that she had treated like me.

My illness was not my only sorrow; I had others which, although of a different nature, were not less serious. It was written in the book of fate that I should return to Venice a simple ensign as when I left; the general did not keep his word, and the bastard son of a nobleman was promoted to the lieutenantancy instead of myself. From that moment the military profession, the one most subject to arbitrary despotism, inspired me with disgust, and I determined to give it up. But I had another still more important motive for sorrow in the fickleness of Fortune, which had completely turned against me. I remarked that, from the time of my degradation with Melulla, every kind of misfortune befell me. The greatest of all, that which I felt most, but which I had the good sense to try and consider a favour, was that a week before the departure of the army M. D— R— took me again for his adjutant and M. F— had to engage another in my place. On the occasion of that change Madame F— told me, with an appearance of regret, that in Venice we could not, for many reasons, continue our intimacy. I begged her to spare me the reasons, as I foresaw that they would only throw humiliation upon me. I began to discover that the goddess I had worshipped was, after all, a poor human being

like all other women, and to think that I should have been very foolish to give up my life for her. I probed in one day the real worth of her heart, for she told me, I cannot recollect in reference to what, that I excited her pity. I saw clearly that she no longer loved me; pity is a debasing feeling which cannot find a home in a heart full of love, for that dreary sentiment is too near a relative of contempt. Since that time I never found myself alone with Madame F—. I loved her still; I could easily have made her blush, but I did not do it.

As soon as we reached Venice she became attached to M. F— R—, whom she loved until death took him from her. She was unfortunate enough to lose her sight twenty years after. I believe she is still alive.

During the last two months of my stay in Corfu I learned the most bitter and important lessons. In after years I often derived useful hints from the experience I acquired at that time.

Before my adventure with the worthless Melulla, I enjoyed good health, I was rich, lucky at play, liked by everybody, beloved by the most lovely woman of Corfu. When I spoke, everybody would listen and admire my wit; my words were taken for oracles, and everyone agreed with me in everything. After my fatal meeting with the courtesan I rapidly lost my health, my money, my credit; cheerfulness, consideration, wit, everything, even the faculty of eloquence vanished with fortune. I would talk, but people knew that I was unfortunate, and I no longer interested or convinced my hearers. The influence I had over Madame F— faded away little by little, and, almost without her knowing it, the lovely woman became completely indifferent to me.

I left Corfu without money, although I had sold or pledged everything I had of any value. Twice I had reached Corfu rich and happy, twice I left it poor and miserable. But this time I had contracted debts which I have never paid, not through want of will but through carelessness.

Rich and in good health, everyone received me with open arms; poor and looking sick, no one showed me any consideration. With a full purse and the tone of a conqueror, I was thought witty, amusing; with an empty purse and a modest air, all I said appeared dull and insipid. If I had become rich again, how soon I would have been again accounted the eighth wonder of the world! Oh, men! oh, Fortune! Everyone avoided me as if the ill luck which crushed me down was infectious.

We left Corfu towards the end of September, with five galleys, two galleasses and several smaller vessels, under the command of M. Renier. We sailed along the shores of the Adriatic, towards the north of the gulf, where there are a great many harbours, and we put in at one of them every night. I saw Madame F— every evening; she always came with her husband to take supper on board our galleass. We had a fortunate voyage and cast anchor in the harbour of Venice on the 14th of October, 1745, and, after having performed quarantine on board our ships, we landed on the 25th of November. Two months afterwards the galleasses were set aside altogether. The use of these

vessels could be traced very far back in ancient times; their maintenance was very expensive, and they were useless. A galleass had the frame of a frigate with the rowing apparatus of the galley, and, when there was no wind, five hundred slaves had to row.

Before simple good sense managed to prevail and to enforce the suppression of these useless carcasses, there were long discussions in the Senate, and those who opposed the measure took their principal ground of opposition in the necessity of respecting and conserving all the institutions of olden times. That is the disease of persons who can never identify themselves with the successive improvements born of reason and experience—worthy persons who ought to be sent to China or to the dominions of the Grand Lama, where they would certainly be more at home than in Europe.

That ground of opposition to all improvements, however absurd it may be, is a very powerful one in a republic, which must tremble at the mere idea of novelty in either important or trifling things. Superstition has likewise a great part to play in these conservative views.

There is one thing that the Republic of Venice will never alter: I mean the galleys, because the Venetians truly require such vessels to ply, in all weathers and in spite of the frequent calms, in a narrow sea and because they would not know what to do with the men sentenced to hard labour.

I have observed a singular thing in Corfu, where there are often as many as three thousand galley slaves; it is that the men who row on the galleys, in consequence of a sentence passed upon them for some crime, are held in a kind of opprobrium, whilst those who are there voluntarily are, to some extent, respected. I have always thought it ought to be the reverse, because misfortune, whatever it may be, ought to inspire some sort of respect; but the vile fellow who condemns himself voluntarily and as a trade to the position of a slave seems to me contemptible in the highest degree. The convicts of the Republic, however, enjoy many privileges, and are, in every way, better treated than the soldiers. It very often occurs that soldiers desert and give themselves up to a *sopracomito* to become galley slaves. In those cases, the captain who loses a soldier has nothing to do but to submit patiently, for he would claim the man in vain. The reason of it is that the Republic has always believed galley slaves more necessary than soldiers. The Venetians may perhaps now (I am writing these lines in the year 1797) begin to realise their mistake.

A galley slave, for instance, has the privilege of stealing with impunity. It is considered that stealing is the least crime they can be guilty of and that they ought to be forgiven for it.

"Keep on your guard," says the master of the galley slave, "and, if you catch him in the act of stealing, thrash him, but be careful not to cripple him; otherwise you must pay me the one hundred ducats the man has cost me."

A court of justice could not have a guilty galley slave hung without first paying the master the amount he had disbursed for the man.

As soon as I had landed in Venice, I called upon Madame Orio, but found the house empty. A neighbour told me that she had married the Procurator Rosa and had removed to his house. I went immediately to M. Rosa and was well received. Madame Orio informed me that Nanette had become Countess R— and was living in Guastalla with her husband.

Twenty-four years afterwards I met her eldest son, then a distinguished officer in the service of the Infante of Parma.

As for Marton, the grace of Heaven had touched her and she had become a nun in the convent at Muran. Two years afterwards I received from her a letter full of unction in which she adjured me, in the name of Our Saviour and of the Holy Virgin, never to present myself before her eyes. She added that she was bound by Christian charity to forgive me for the crime I had committed in seducing her, and she felt certain of the reward of the elect, and she assured me that she would ever pray earnestly for my conversion.

I never saw her again, but she saw me in 1754, as I will mention when we reach that year.

I found Madame Manzoni still the same. She had predicted that I would not remain in the military profession, and, when I told her that I had made up my mind to give it up because I could not be reconciled to the injustice I had experienced, she burst out laughing. She inquired about the profession I intended to follow after giving up the army, and I answered that I wished to become an advocate. She laughed again, saying that it was too late. Yet I was only twenty years old.

When I called upon M. Grimani I had a friendly welcome from him, but, having inquired after my brother François, he told me that he had had him confined in Fort St. André, the same to which I had been sent before the arrival of the Bishop of Martorano.

"He works for the major there," he said. "He copies Simonetti's battle pieces, and the major pays him for them; in that manner he earns his living and is becoming a good painter."

"But he is not a prisoner?"

"Well, very much like it, for he cannot leave the fort. The major, whose name is Spiridion, is a friend of Razetta, who could not refuse him the pleasure of taking care of your brother."

I felt it a dreadful curse that the fatal Razetta should be the tormentor of all my family, but I concealed my anger.

"Is my sister," I inquired, "still with him?"

"No, she has gone to your mother in Dresden."

This was good news.

I took a cordial leave of the Abbé Grimani and proceeded to Fort St. André. I found my brother hard at work, neither pleased nor displeased with his position and enjoying good health. After embracing

him affectionately, I inquired what crime he had committed to be thus a prisoner.

"Ask the major," he said, "for I have not the faintest idea."

The major came in just then, so I gave him the military salute and asked by what authority he kept my brother under arrest.

"I am not accountable to you for my actions."

"That remains to be seen."

I then told my brother to take his hat and to come and dine with me. The major laughed and said that he had no objection, provided the sentinel allowed him to pass.

I saw that I should only waste my time in discussion, and I left the fort, fully bent on obtaining justice.

The next day I went to the War Office, where I had the pleasure of meeting my dear Major Pelodoro, who was then commander of the Fortress of Chiozza. I informed him of the complaint I wanted to prefer before the Secretary of War respecting my brother's arrest and of the resolution I had taken to leave the army. He promised me that, as soon as the consent of the Secretary of War could be obtained, he would find a purchaser for my commission at the same price I had paid for it.

I had not long to wait. The War Secretary came to the office and everything was settled in half an hour. He promised his consent to the sale of my commission as soon as he ascertained the abilities of the purchaser, and, Major Spiridion happening to make his appearance in the office while I was still there, the secretary ordered him, rather angrily, to set my brother at liberty immediately and cautioned him not to be guilty again of such reprehensible and arbitrary acts.

I went at once for my brother, and we lived together in furnished lodgings.

A few days afterwards, having received my discharge and one hundred sequins, I threw off my uniform and found myself once more my own master.

I had to earn my living in one way or another, and I decided upon the profession of gamester. But Dame Fortune was not of the same opinion, for she refused to smile upon me from the very first step I took in the career, and in less than a week I did not possess a groat. What was to become of me? One must live, and I turned fiddler. Doctor Gozzi had taught me well enough to enable me to scrape on the violin in the orchestra of a theatre, and having mentioned my wishes to M. Grimani, he procured me an engagement at his own theatre of Saint Samuel, where I earned a crown a day, and supported myself while I awaited better things.

Fully aware of my real position, I never showed myself in the fashionable circles which I used to frequent before my fortune had sunk so low. I knew that I was considered as a worthless fellow, but I did not care. People despised me as a matter of course; but I found comfort in the consciousness that I was unworthy of contempt. I felt humiliated by the position to which I was reduced after having played

so brilliant a part in society; but as I kept the secret to myself I was not degraded, even if I felt some shame. I had not exchanged my last word with Dame Fortune and was still in hope of reckoning with her some day, because I was young, and youth is dear to Fortune.

CHAPTER 17

WITH an education which ought to have ensured me an honourable standing in the world, with some intelligence, wit, good literary and scientific knowledge, and endowed with those accidental physical qualities which are such a good passport into society, I found myself at the age of twenty the mean follower of a sublime art in which, if great talent is rightly admired, mediocrity is as rightly despised. I was compelled by poverty to become a member of a musical band, in which I could expect neither esteem nor consideration, and I was well aware that I should be the laughing-stock of the persons who had known me as a doctor in divinity, as an ecclesiastic and as an officer in the army and had welcomed me in the highest society.

I knew all that, for I was not blind to my position; but contempt, the only thing to which I could not have remained indifferent, never showed itself anywhere under a form tangible enough for me to be justified in taking offence, and I set it at defiance because I was satisfied that contempt is due only to cowardly, mean actions, and I was conscious that I had never been guilty of any. As to public esteem, which I had ever been anxious to secure, my ambition was slumbering, and, satisfied with being my own master, I enjoyed my independence without puzzling my head about the future. I felt that in my first profession, as I was not blessed with the vocation necessary to it, I should have succeeded only by dint of hypocrisy and I should have been despicable in my own estimation, even if I had seen the purple mantle on my shoulders, for the greatest dignities cannot silence a man's own conscience. If, on the other hand, I had continued to seek fortune in a military career, which is surrounded by a halo of glory but is otherwise the worst of professions for the constant self-abnegation, the complete surrender of one's will which passive obedience demands, I should have required a patience to which I could not lay any claim, as every kind of injustice was revolting to me and I could not bear to feel myself dependent. Besides, I was of the opinion that a man's profession, whatever it might be, ought to supply him with enough money to satisfy all his wants; and the very poor pay of an officer would never have been sufficient to cover my expenses, because my upbringing had given me greater wants than those of officers in general. By scraping my violin, I earned enough to keep myself without requiring anybody's assistance, and I have always thought that the man who can support himself is happy. I grant that my profession was not a brilliant one, but I did not mind that, and, calling prejudices all the feelings which rose in my breast against myself, I was

not long in sharing all the habits of my degraded comrades. When the play was over, I went with them to the drinking-booth, which we often left intoxicated, to spend the night in houses of ill-fame. When we happened to find those places already tenanted by other men, we forced them by violence to quit the premises, and defrauded the miserable victims of prostitution of the mean salary the law allows them, after compelling them to yield to our brutality. Our scandalous proceedings often exposed us to the greatest danger.

We would very often spend the whole night rambling about the city, inventing and carrying into execution the most impertinent practical jokes. One of our favourite pleasures was to unmoor the patricians' gondolas, and to let them float at random along the canals, enjoying by anticipation all the curses that the gondoliers would not fail to indulge in. We would rouse up hurriedly in the middle of the night an honest midwife, telling her to hasten to Madame So-and-so, who, not being even pregnant, was sure to tell her she was a fool when she called at her house. We did the same with physicians, whom we often sent half-dressed to some nobleman who was enjoying excellent health. The priests fared no better; we would send them to carry the last sacraments to married men who were peacefully slumbering near their wives and not thinking of extreme unction.

We were in the habit of cutting the wires of the bells in every house, and, if we chanced to find a gate open, we would go up the stairs in the dark and frighten the sleeping inmates by telling them very loudly that the house door was not closed, after which we would go down, making as much noise as we could, and leave the house with the gate wide open.

During a very dark night we formed a plot to overturn the large marble table of St. Angelo's Square, on which it was said that in the days of the League of Cambray the commissaries of the Republic were in the habit of paying the bounty to the recruits who engaged to fight under the standard of St. Mark, a circumstance which secured for the table a sort of public veneration.

Whenever we could contrive to get into a church tower, we thought it great fun to frighten all the parish by ringing the alarm bell, as if some fire had broken out; but this was not all—we always cut the bell ropes, so that in the morning the bell-ringers had no means of summoning the faithful to early mass. Sometimes we would cross the canal, each of us in a different gondola, and take to our heels without paying as soon as we landed on the opposite side, in order to make the gondoliers run after us.

The city was alive with complaints, and we laughed at the useless search made by the police to find out those who disturbed the peace of the inhabitants. We took good care to be careful, for, if we had been discovered, we stood a very fair chance of being sent to practice rowing at the expense of the Council of Ten.

We were seven, and sometimes eight, because, being much attached to my brother François, I gave him a share now and then in our

nocturnal orgies. But at last fear put a stop to our criminal jokes, which in those days I used to call only the frolics of young men. This is the amusing adventure which closed our exploits:

In every one of the seventy-two parishes of the city of Venice, there is a large public-house called *magazzino*. It remains open all night, and wine is retailed there at a cheaper price than in all the other drinking-houses. People can likewise eat in the *magazzino*, but they must obtain what they want from the pork butcher near by, who has the exclusive sale of eatables and likewise keeps his shop open throughout the night. The pork butcher is usually a very poor cook, but, as he is cheap, poor people are willingly satisfied with him, and these resorts are considered very useful to the lower class. The nobility, the merchants, even workmen in good circumstances, are never seen in the *magazzini*, for cleanliness is not exactly worshipped in such places. Yet there are a few private rooms which contain a table surrounded with benches and in which a respectable family or a few friends can enjoy themselves in a decent way.

It was during the Carnival of 1745, after midnight; we were all eight of us rambling about together with our masks on, in quest of some sort of mischief to amuse us, and we went into the *magazzino* of the parish of the Holy Cross to get something to drink. We found the public room empty, but in one of the private chambers we discovered three men quietly conversing with a young and pretty woman and enjoying their wine.

Our chief, a Venetian noble belonging to the Balbi family, said to us, "It would be a good joke to carry off those three blockheads and keep the pretty woman in our possession." He immediately explained his plan, and under cover of our masks we entered their room, Balbi at the head of us. Our sudden appearance rather surprised the good people, but you may fancy their astonishment when they heard Balbi say to them, "Under penalty of death and by order of the Council of Ten, I command you to follow us immediately without making the slightest noise; as to you, my good woman, you need not be frightened, you will be escorted to your home." When he had finished his speech, two of us got hold of the woman to take her where our chief had arranged beforehand, and the others seized the three poor fellows, who were trembling all over and had not the slightest idea of opposing any resistance.

The waiter of the *magazzino* came to be paid, and our chief gave him what was due, enjoining silence under penalty of death. We took our three prisoners to a large boat. Balbi went to the stern, ordered the boatman to stand at the bow and told him that he need not inquire where we were going, that he would steer himself whichever way he thought fit. Not one of us knew where Balbi wanted to take the three poor devils.

He sails all along the canal, gets out of it, takes several turnings, and in a quarter of an hour we reach St. George, where Balbi lands our prisoners, delighted to find themselves at liberty. After this the

boatman is ordered to take us to St. Genevieve, where we land, after paying for the boat.

We proceed at once to Palombo Square, where my brother and another of our band were waiting for us with our lovely prisoner, who was crying.

"Do not weep, my beauty," says Balbi to her, "we will not hurt you. We intend only to take some refreshment at the Rialto, and then we will take you home in safety."

"Where is my husband?"

"Never fear; you shall see him again to-morrow."

Comforted by that promise, and as gentle as a lamb, she follows us to the Two Swords. We order a good fire in a private room, and, everything we wanted to eat and drink having been brought in, we send the waiter away and remain alone. We take off our masks, and the sight of eight young, healthy faces seems to please the beauty we had so unceremoniously carried off. We soon managed to reconcile her to her fate by the gallantry of our proceedings; encouraged by a good supper and by the stimulus of wine, prepared by our compliments and by a few kisses, she realises what is in store for her and does not seem to have any unconquerable objection. Our chief, as a matter of right, claims the privilege of opening the ball and by dint of sweet words overcomes the very natural repugnance she feels at consummating the sacrifice in so numerous a company. She doubtless thinks the offering agreeable, for, when I present myself as the priest appointed to sacrifice a second time to the god of love, she receives me almost with gratitude and cannot conceal her joy when she finds out that she is destined to make us all happy. My brother François alone exempted himself from paying the tribute, saying that he was ill, the only excuse which could render his refusal valid, for we had established as a law that every member of our society was bound to do whatever was done by the others.

After that fine exploit, we put on our masks, and, the bill being paid, escorted the happy victim to St. Job, where she lived, and did not leave her till we had seen her safe in her house and the street door closed.

My readers may imagine whether we felt inclined to laugh when the charming creature bade us good night, thanking us all with perfect good faith!

Two days afterwards our nocturnal orgy began to be talked of. The young woman's husband was a weaver by trade, and so were his two friends. They joined together to address a complaint to the Council of Ten. The complaint was candidly written and contained nothing but the truth, but the criminal portion of the truth was veiled by a circumstance which must have brought a smile on the grave countenances of the judges and highly amused the public, at large—the complaint setting forth that the eight masked men had not rendered themselves guilty of any act disagreeable to the wife. It went on to say that the two men who had carried her off had taken her to such a place, where

they had an hour later been met by the other six, and that they had all repaired to the Two Swords, where they had spent an hour in drinking. The said lady, having been handsomely entertained by the eight masked men, had been escorted to her home, where she had been politely requested to excuse the joke perpetrated upon her husband. The three plaintiffs had not been able to leave the island of St. George until daybreak, and the husband, on reaching his house, had found his wife quietly asleep in her bed. She had informed him of all that happened; she complained of nothing but the great fright she had experienced on account of her husband, and on that account she entreated justice and the punishment of the guilty parties.

That complaint was comic throughout, for the three rogues showed themselves very brave in writing, stating that they would certainly not have given way so easily if the dreaded authority of the Council had not been put forth by the leader of the band. The document produced three different results: in the first place, it amused the town; in the second, all the idlers of Venice went to St. Job to hear the account of the adventure from the lips of the heroine herself, and she got many presents from her numerous visitors; in the third place, the Council of Ten offered a reward of five hundred ducats to any person giving such information as would lead to the arrest of the perpetrators of the practical joke, even if the informer belonged to the band, provided he was not the leader.

The offer of that reward would have made us tremble if our leader, precisely the one who alone had no interest in turning informer, had not been a patrician. The rank of Balbi quieted my anxiety at once, because I knew that, even supposing one of us were vile enough to betray our secret for the sake of the reward, the tribunal would have done nothing to implicate a patrician. There was no cowardly traitor amongst us, although we were all poor; but fear had its effect, and our nocturnal pranks were not renewed.

Three or four months afterwards the Chevalier Nicolas Iron, then one of the Inquisitors, astonished me greatly by telling me the whole story, giving the names of all the actors. He did not tell me whether any one of the band had betrayed the secret, and I did not care to know; but I could clearly see the characteristic spirit of aristocracy, for which *solo mihi* is the supreme law.

Towards the middle of April of the year 1746, M. Girolamo Cornaro, the eldest son of the family Cornaro de la Reine, married a daughter of the house of Soranzo de Saint Pol, and I had the honour of being present at the wedding—as a fiddler. I played the violin in one of the numerous bands engaged for the balls which were given for three consecutive days in the Soranzo Palace.

On the third day towards the end of the dancing, an hour before daybreak, feeling tired, I left the orchestra abruptly; and, as I was going down the stairs I observed a senator, wearing his red robes, on the point of getting into a gondola. In taking his handkerchief out of his pocket, he let a letter drop on the ground. I picked it up and, coming

up to him just as he was going down the steps, handed it to him. He received it with many thanks and inquired where I lived. I told him, and he insisted upon my coming with him in the gondola, saying that he would leave me at my house. I accepted gratefully and sat down near him. A few minutes afterwards he asked me to rub his left arm, which, he said, was so benumbed that he could not feel it. I rubbed it with all my strength, but he told me in a sort of indistinct whisper that the numbness was spreading all along the left side and that he was dying.

I was greatly frightened; I opened the curtain, took the lantern and found him almost insensible, and his mouth drawn on one side. I understood that he was seized with an apoplectic stroke, and called out to the gondoliers to land me at once, in order to procure a surgeon to bleed the patient.

I jumped out of the gondola and found myself on the very spot where three years before I had taught Razetta such a forcible lesson; I inquired for a surgeon at the first coffee-house and ran to the house that was pointed out to me. I knocked as hard as I could; the door was at last opened, and I made the surgeon follow me in his dressing-gown as far as the gondola, which was waiting; he bled the senator while I was tearing my shirt to make the compress and the bandage.

The operation being performed, I ordered the gondoliers to row as fast as possible, and we soon reached Saint Marina; the servants were roused up, and, taking the sick man out of the gondola, we carried him to his bed almost dead.

Taking everything upon myself, I ordered a servant to hurry out for a physician, who came in a short time and ordered the patient to be bled again, thus approving the first bleeding prescribed by me. Thinking I had a right to watch the sick man, I settled myself near his bed, to give him every care he required.

An hour later two noblemen, friends of the senator, came in, one a few minutes after the other. They were in despair; they had inquired about the accident from the gondoliers, and, having been told that I knew more than they did, they loaded me with questions, which I answered. They did not know who I was and did not like to ask me, whilst I thought it better to preserve a modest silence.

The patient did not move; his breathing alone showed that he was still alive; fomentations were constantly applied, and the priest, who had been sent for and was of very little use under such circumstances, seemed to be there only to see him die. All visitors were sent away by my advice, and the two noblemen and myself were the only persons in the sick man's room. At noon we partook silently of some dinner, which was served in the sick-room.

In the evening one of the two friends told me that, if I had any business to attend to, I could go, because they would both pass the night on a mattress near the patient.

"And I, sir," I said, "will remain near his bed in this armchair, for,

if I went away, the patient would die, and he will live as long as I am near him."

This sententious answer struck them with astonishment, as I expected it would, and they looked at each other in great surprise.

We had supper, and, in the little conversation we had, I gathered the information that the senator, their friend, was M. de Bragadin, the only brother of the procurator of that name. He was celebrated in Venice not only for his eloquence and his great talents as a statesman, but also for the gallantries of his youth. He had been very extravagant with women, and more than one of them had committed many follies for him. He had gambled and lost a great deal, and his brother was his most bitter enemy because he was infatuated with the idea that he had tried to poison him. He had accused him of that crime before the Council of Ten, which after an investigation of eight months had brought in a verdict of not guilty; but that just sentence, although given unanimously by that high tribunal, had not had the effect of destroying his brother's prejudices against him.

M. de Bragadin, who was perfectly innocent of such a crime and oppressed by an unjust brother who deprived him of half of his income, spent his days like an amiable philosopher, surrounded by his friends, amongst whom were the two noblemen who were then watching him; one belonged to the Dandolo family, the other was a Barbaro, and both were excellent men. M. de Bragadin was handsome, learned, cheerful and most kindly disposed; he was then about fifty years old.

The physician who attended him was named Terro; he thought, by some peculiar train of reasoning, that he could cure him by applying a mercurial ointment to the chest, to which no one raised any objection. The rapid effect of the remedy delighted the two friends, but it frightened me, for in less than twenty-four hours the patient was labouring under great excitement of the brain. The physician said that he had expected that effect, but that on the following day the remedy would act less on the brain, and diffuse its beneficial action through the whole of the system, which required to be invigorated by a proper equilibrium in the circulation of the fluids.

At midnight the patient was in a high fever and in a fearful state of irritation. I examined him closely and found him hardly able to breathe. I roused up his two friends and declared that in my opinion the patient would soon die unless the fatal ointment was at once removed. And, without waiting for their answer, I bared his chest, took off the plaster, washed the skin carefully with luke-warm water, and in less than three minutes he was breathing freely and fell into a quiet sleep. Delighted with such a fortunate result, we lay down again.

The physician came very early in the morning and was much pleased to see his patient so much better, but, when M. Dandolo informed him of what had been done, he was angry, said it was enough to kill his patient and asked who had been so audacious as to destroy the effect of his prescription. M. de Bragadin, speaking for the first time, said to him, "Doctor, the person who has delivered me from your mercury,

which was killing me, is a more skilful physician than you," and, saying these words, he pointed to me.

It would be hard to say who was the more astonished, the doctor when he saw an unknown young man, whom he must have taken for an impostor, declared more learned than himself, or I when I saw myself transformed into a physician at a moment's notice. I kept silent, looking very modest but hardly able to control my mirth, whilst the doctor was staring at me with a mixture of astonishment and spite, evidently thinking me some bold quack who had tried to supplant him. At last, turning towards M. de Bragadin, he told him coldly that he would leave him in my hands; he was taken at his word, he went away, and behold! I had become the physician of one of the most illustrious members of the Venetian Senate! I must confess that I was very glad of it, and I told my patient that a proper diet was all he needed and that nature, assisted by the approaching fine season, would do the rest.

The dismissed physician related the affair through the town, and, as M. de Bragadin was rapidly improving, one of his relations, who came to see him, told him that everybody was astonished at his having chosen for his physician a fiddler from the theatre; but the senator put a stop to his remarks by answering that a fiddler could know more than all the doctors in Venice, and that he owed his life to me.

The worthy nobleman considered me as his oracle, and his two friends listened to me with the deepest attention. Their infatuation encouraging me, I spoke like a learned physician, I dogmatised, I quoted authors whom I had never read.

M. de Bragadin, who had the weakness to believe in the occult sciences, told me one day that, for a young man of my age, he thought my learning too extensive, and that he was certain I was the possessor of some supernatural endowment. He entreated me to tell him the truth.

What extraordinary things will sometimes occur from mere chance or from the force of circumstances! Unwilling to hurt his vanity by telling him that he was mistaken, I took the wild resolution of informing him in the presence of his two friends that I possessed a certain numeral calculus which gave answers (also in numbers) to any questions I liked to put.

M. de Bragadin said that it was Solomon's Key, vulgarly called cabalistic science, and asked me from whom I had learnt it.

"From an old hermit," I answered, "who lives on the Carpegna Mountain, and whose acquaintance I made quite by chance when I was a prisoner in the Spanish army."

"The hermit," remarked the senator, "has, without informing you of it, linked an invisible spirit to the calculus he has taught you, for simple numbers cannot have the power of reason. You possess a real treasure, and you may derive great advantages from it."

"I do not know," I said, "in what way I could make my science useful because the answers given by the numerical figures are often so obscure that I have felt discouraged, and I very seldom try to make any use of my calculus. Yet it is very true that, if I had not formed

my pyramid, I never should have had the happiness of knowing Your Excellency."

"How so?"

"On the second day, during the festivities at the Soranzo Palace, I inquired of my oracle whether I would meet at the ball anyone whom I should not care to see. The answer I obtained was this: 'Leave the ballroom precisely at four o'clock.' I obeyed implicitly and met Your Excellency."

The three friends were astounded. M. Dandolo asked me whether I would answer a question he would ask, the interpretation of which would belong only to him, as he was the only person acquainted with the subject of the question.

I declared myself quite willing, for it was necessary to brazen it out after having ventured as far as I had done. He wrote the question and gave it to me; I read it, I could not understand either the subject or the meaning of the words, but it did not matter, I had to give an answer. If the question was so obscure that I could not make out the sense of it, it was natural that I should not understand the answer. I therefore answered in ordinary figures four lines, of which he alone could be the interpreter, not caring much, at least in appearance, how they would be understood. M. Dandolo read them twice over, seemed astonished, said that it was all plain to him; it was divine, it was unique, it was a gift from Heaven, the numbers being only the vehicle, but the answer emanating evidently from an immortal spirit.

M. Dandolo was so well pleased that his two friends very naturally wanted also to make an experiment. They asked questions on all sorts of subjects, and my answers, perfectly unintelligible to myself, were all held as divine by them. I congratulated them on their success and congratulated myself in their presence upon being the possessor of a thing to which I had until then attached no importance whatever, but which I promised to cultivate carefully, knowing that I could thus be of some service to their excellencies.

They all asked me how long I would require to teach them the rules of my sublime calculus. "Not very long," I answered, "and I will teach you if you wish, although the hermit assured me that I would die suddenly within three days if I communicated my science to anyone, but I have no faith whatever in that prediction." M. de Bragadin, who believed in it more than I did, told me in a serious tone that I was bound to have faith in it, and from that day they never asked me again to teach them. They very likely thought that, if they could attach me to them, it would answer the purpose as well as if they possessed the science themselves. Thus I became the hierophant of those three worthy and talented men, who, in spite of their literary accomplishments, were not wise, since they were infatuated with occult and fabulous sciences and believed in the existence of phenomena impossible in the moral as well as the physical order of things. They believed that through me they possessed the Philosopher's Stone, the universal panacea, intercourse with all the elementary, heavenly and infernal spirits;

they had no doubt whatever that, thanks to my sublime science, they could find out the secrets of every government in Europe.

After they had assured themselves of the reality of my cabalistic science by questions respecting the past, they decided to turn it to some use by consulting it upon the present and upon the future. I had no difficulty in showing myself a good guesser because I always gave answers with a double meaning, one of the meanings being carefully arranged by me so as not to be understood until after the event; in that manner my cabalistic science, like the Oracle of Delphi, could never be found in fault. I saw how easy it must have been for the ancient heathen priests to impose upon ignorant and therefore credulous mankind. I saw how easy it will always be for impostors to find dupes and realised even better than the Roman orator why two augurs could never look at each other without laughing; it was because they had both an equal interest in giving importance to the deceit they perpetrated and from which they derived such immense profits. But what I could not, and probably never shall, understand, was the reason for which the Fathers, who were not so simple or so ignorant as our Evangelists, did not feel able to deny the divinity of oracles and, in order to get out of the difficulty, ascribed them to the devil. They never would have entertained such a strange idea if they had been acquainted with cabalistic science. My three worthy friends were like the Holy Fathers; they had intelligence and wit, but they were superstitious and no philosophers. But, although believing fully in my oracles, they were too kind-hearted to think them the work of the devil, and it suited their natural goodness better to believe my answers inspired by some heavenly spirit.

They were not only good Christians and faithful to the Church, but even real devotees and full of scruples. They were not married and, after having renounced all commerce with women, had become the enemies of the female sex; perhaps a strong proof of the weakness of their minds. They imagined that chastity was the condition *sine qua non* exacted by the spirits from those who wished to have intimate communication or intercourse with them; they fancied that spirits excluded women and *vice versa*.

With all these oddities, the three friends were truly intelligent and even witty, and at the beginning of my acquaintance with them I could not reconcile these antagonistic points. But a prejudiced mind cannot reason well, and the faculty of reasoning is the most important of all. I often laughed when I heard them talk on religious matters; they would ridicule those whose intellectual faculties were so limited that they could not understand the mysteries of religion. The incarnation of the Word, they would say, was a trifle for God and therefore easy to understand, and the Resurrection was so comprehensible that it did not appear to them wonderful because, as God cannot die, Jesus Christ was naturally certain to rise again. As for the Eucharist, transubstantiation, the real presence, it was all no mystery to them but palpable evidence, and yet they were not Jesuits. They were in the habit of going

to confession every week without feeling the slightest trouble about their confessors, whose ignorance they kindly regretted. They thought themselves bound to confess only what was a sin in their own opinion, and in that, at least, they reasoned with good sense.

With those three extraordinary characters, worthy of esteem and respect for their moral qualities, their honesty, their reputation and their age, as well as for their noble birth, I spent my days in a very pleasant manner; although in their thirst for knowledge they often kept me hard at work for ten hours running, all four of us locked up together in a room and unapproachable to everybody, even to friends or relatives.

I completed the conquest of their friendship by relating to them the whole of my life, only with some proper reserve so as not to lead them into any capital sins. I confess candidly that I deceived them, as the *papa* Deldimopulo used to deceive the Greeks who applied to him for the oracles of the Virgin. I certainly did not act towards them with a true sense of honesty, but, if the reader to whom I confess myself is acquainted with the world and with the spirit of society, I entreat him to think before judging me, and perhaps I may meet with some indulgence at his hands.

I might be told that, if I had wished to follow the rules of pure morality, I ought either to have declined intimate intercourse with them or to have undeceived them. I cannot deny these premises, but I will answer that I was only twenty years of age. I was intelligent, talented, and had just been a poor fiddler. I should have wasted my time in trying to cure them of their weaknesses; I should not have succeeded, for they would have laughed in my face, deplored my ignorance, and the result of it all would have been my dismissal. Besides, I had no mission, no right to constitute myself an apostle, and, if I had heroically resolved on leaving them as soon as I knew them to be foolish visionaries, I should have shown myself a misanthrope, the enemy of those worthy men for whom I could procure innocent pleasures, and my own enemy at the same time because, being a young man, I liked to live well, to enjoy all the pleasures natural to youth and to a good constitution. By acting in that manner, I should have failed in common politeness, I should perhaps have caused or allowed M. de Bragadin's death, and I should have exposed those three honest men to becoming the victims of the first bold cheat who, ministering to their monomania, might have won their favour and would have ruined them by inducing them to undertake the chemical operations of the Great Work. There is also another consideration, dear reader, and, as I like you, I will tell you what it is. An invincible self-love would have prevented me from declaring myself unworthy of their friendship either by my ignorance or by my pride, and I should have been guilty of great rudeness if I had ceased to visit them.

I made—at least, it seems to me so—the best, the most natural and the noblest decision, if we consider the disposition of their minds, when I decided upon the plan of conduct which insured me the necessities

of life; and of those necessities who could be a better judge than your very humble servant?

Through the friendship of those three men, I was certain of obtaining consideration and influence in my own country. Besides, I found it very flattering to my vanity to become the subject of the speculative chattering of empty fools, who, having nothing else to do, are always trying to find out the cause of every moral phenomenon they meet with which their narrow intellect cannot understand.

People racked their brains in Venice to find out how my intimacy with three men of that high character could possibly exist; they were wrapped up in heavenly aspirations—I was a world's devotee; they were very strict in their morals—I was thirsty of all pleasures!

At the beginning of summer M. de Bragadin was once more able to take his seat in the Senate, and, the day before he went out for the first time, he spoke to me thus:

"Whoever you may be, I am indebted to you for my life. Your first protectors wanted to make you a priest, a doctor, an advocate, a soldier, and ended by making a fiddler of you; those persons did not know you. God had evidently instructed your guardian angel to bring you to me. I know you and appreciate you. If you will be my son, you have only to acknowledge me for your father, and in future, until my death, I will treat you as my own child. Your apartment is ready, you may send your clothes; you shall have a servant, a gondola at your orders, my own table and ten sequins a month. It is the sum I used to receive from my father when I was your age. You need not think of the future; think only of enjoying yourself and take me as your adviser in everything that may happen to you, in everything you may wish to undertake, and you may be certain of always finding me your friend."

I threw myself at his feet to assure him of my gratitude and embraced him, calling him my father. He folded me in his arms, called me his dear son; I promised to love and obey him; his two friends, who lived in the same palace, embraced me affectionately, and we swore eternal fraternity.

Such is the history of my metamorphosis and of the lucky stroke which, taking me from the vile profession of a fiddler, raised me to the rank of a grandee.

CHAPTER 18

FORTUNE, which had taken pleasure in giving me a specimen of its despotic caprice and had insured my happiness through means which sages would disavow, had not the power to make me adopt a system of moderation and prudence which alone could establish my future welfare on a firm basis.

My ardent nature, my irresistible love of pleasure, my unconquerable independence would not allow me to submit to the reserve which my new position in life demanded from me. I began to lead a life of complete freedom, caring for nothing but what ministered to my tastes,

and I thought that, as long as I respected the laws, I could trample all prejudices under my feet. I fancied that I could live free and independent in a country ruled entirely by an aristocratic government, but this was not the case and would not have been so even if fortune had raised me to a seat in that same government, for the Republic of Venice, considering that its primary duty is to preserve its own dignity, finds itself the slave of its own policy and is bound to sacrifice everything to self-preservation, before which the laws themselves cease to be inviolable.

But let us abandon the discussion of a principle now too trite, for humankind, at least in Europe, is satisfied that unlimited liberty is nowhere consistent with a properly regulated state of society. I have touched lightly on the matter, only to give my readers some idea of my conduct in my own country, where I began to tread a path which was to lead me to a state prison as inscrutable as it was unconstitutional.

With enough money, endowed by nature with a pleasing and commanding physical appearance, a confirmed gambler, a true spendthrift, a great talker, very far from modest, intrepid, always running after pretty women, supplanting my rivals and acknowledging no good company but that which ministered to my enjoyment, I was certain to be disliked; but, ever ready to expose myself to any danger and take the responsibility of all my actions, I thought I had a right to do anything I pleased, for I always broke down abruptly every obstacle I found in my way.

Such conduct could not but be disagreeable to the three worthy men whose oracle I had become, but they did not like to complain. The excellent M. de Bragadin would only tell me that I was giving him a repetition of the foolish life he had himself led at my age, but that I must prepare to pay the penalty of my follies and to feel the punishment when I should reach his time of life. Without wanting in the respect I owed him, I would turn his terrible forebodings into jest and continue my course of extravagance. However, I must mention here the first proof he gave me of his true wisdom.

At the house of Madame Avogardo, a woman full of wit in spite of her sixty years, I had made the acquaintance of a young Polish nobleman called Zawoiski. He was expecting money from Poland, but in the meantime the Venetian ladies did not let him want for any, being all very much in love with his handsome face and his Polish manners. We soon became good friends, my purse was his, but twenty years later he assisted me to a far greater extent in Munich. Zawoiski was honest, he had only a small dose of intelligence, but it was enough for his happiness. He died in Trieste five or six years ago, the ambassador of the Elector of Trèves. I will speak of him in another part of these *Memoirs*.

This amiable young man, who was a favourite with everybody and was thought a free-thinker because he frequented the society of Angela Querini and Lunardo Vénier, presented me one day, as we

were out walking, to an unknown countess, who took my fancy very strongly. We called on her in the evening, and, after introducing me to her husband, Count Rinaldi, she invited us to remain and have supper.

The count made a faro bank in the course of the evening. I punted with his wife as a partner and won some fifty ducats.

Very much pleased with my new acquaintance, I called alone on the countess the next morning. The count, apologising for his wife, who was not yet up, took me to her room. She received me with graceful ease, and, her husband having left us alone, she had the art to let me hope for every favour, yet without committing herself; when I took leave of her, she invited me to supper for the evening. After supper I played, still in partnership with her, won again and went away very much in love. I did not fail to pay her another visit the next morning, but, when I presented myself at the house, I was told that she had gone out.

I called again in the evening, and, after she had excused herself for not having been at home in the morning, the faro bank began, and I lost all my money, still having the countess for my partner. After supper, when the other guests had retired, I remained with Zawoiski, Count Rinaldi having offered to give us our revenge. As I had no more money, I played on trust, and the count threw down the cards after I had lost five hundred sequins. I went away in great sorrow. I was bound in honour to pay the next morning, and I did not possess a groat. Love increased my despair, for I saw myself on the point of losing the esteem of a woman by whom I was smitten, and the anxiety I felt did not escape M. de Bragadin when we met in the morning. He kindly encouraged me to confess my troubles to him. I was conscious that it was my only chance and candidly related the whole affair, and I ended by saying that I should not survive my disgrace. He consoled me by promising that my debt would be cancelled in the course of the day if I would swear never to play again on trust. I took an oath to that effect and, kissing his hand, went out for a walk, relieved of a great load. I had no doubt that my excellent father would give me five hundred sequins during the day, and I enjoyed by anticipation the honour I would derive in the opinion of the lovely countess by my exactitude and prompt discharge of my debt. I felt that it gave new strength to my hopes, and that feeling prevented me from regretting my heavy loss, but, grateful for the great generosity of my benefactor, I was fully determined on keeping my promise.

I dined with the three friends, and the matter was not even alluded to; but, as we were rising from the table, a servant brought M. de Bragadin a letter and a parcel. He read the letter, asked me to follow him into his study and, the moment we were alone, said, "Here is a parcel for you."

I opened it and found some forty sequins. Seeing my surprise, M.

de Bragadin laughed merrily and handed me the letter, the contents of which ran thus:

"M. de Casanova may be sure that our playing last night was only a joke; he owes me nothing. My wife begs to send him half of the gold which he lost in cash.

"COUNT RINALDI."

I looked at M. de Bragadin, perfectly amazed, and he burst out laughing. I guessed the truth, thanked him and, embracing him tenderly, promised to be wiser in future. The mist I had before my eyes was dispelled, I felt that my love was defunct, and I remained rather ashamed, when I realised that I had been the dupe of the wife as well as of the husband.

"This evening," said my clever physician, "you can have a gay supper with the charming countess."

"This evening, my dear, respected benefactor, I will have supper with you. You have given me a masterly lesson."

"The next time you lose money on trust, you had better not pay it."

"But I should be dishonoured."

"Never mind. The sooner you dishonour yourself, the more you will save, for you will always be compelled to accept your dishonour whenever you find yourself utterly unable to pay your losses. It is therefore more prudent not to wait until then."

"It is much better still to avoid that fatal impossibility by never playing otherwise than with money in hand."

"No doubt of it, for then you will save both your honour and your purse. But, as you are fond of games of chance, I advise you never to punt. Make the bank, and the advantage must be on your side."

"Yes, but only a slight advantage."

"As slight as you please, but it will be on your side, and, when the game is over, you will find yourself a winner and not a loser. The punter is excited, the banker is calm. The last says, 'I bet you do not guess,' while the first says, 'I bet I can guess.' Which is the fool, and which is the wise man? The question is easily answered. I adjure you to be prudent, but, if you should punt and win, recollect that you are only an idiot if in the end you lose."

"Why 'an idiot'? Fortune is very fickle."

"It must necessarily be so; it is a natural consequence. Leave off playing, believe me, the very moment you see luck turning, even if you should, at that moment, win but one groat."

I had read Plato and was astonished at finding a man who could reason like Socrates.

The next day Zawoiski called on me very early to tell me that I had been expected to supper and that Count Rinaldi had praised my promptness in paying my debts of honour. I did not think it necessary to undeceive him, but I did not go again to visit Count Rinaldi, whom I saw sixteen years afterwards in Milan. As to Zawoiski, I did not

tell him the story till I met him in Carlsbad, old and deaf, forty years later.

Three or four months later M. de Bragadin taught me another of his masterly lessons. I had become acquainted through Zawoiski with a Frenchman called L'Abbadie, who was then soliciting from the Venetian Government the appointment of inspector of the armies of the Republic. The Senate appointed, and I presented him to my protector, who promised him his vote; but the circumstance I am going to relate prevented him from fulfilling his promise.

I was in need of one hundred sequins to discharge a few debts, and I begged M. de Bragadin to give them to me.

"Why, my dear son, do you not ask M. de L'Abbadie to render you that service?"

"I should not dare to do so, dear father."

"Try him; I am certain that he will be glad to lend you that sum."

"I doubt it, but I will try."

I called upon L'Abbadie the following day and after a short exchange of compliments told him the service I expected from his friendship. He excused himself in a very polite manner, drowning his refusal in that sea of commonplaces which people are sure to repeat when they cannot or will not oblige a friend. Zawoiski came in as he was still apologising, and I left them together. I hurried at once to M. de Bragadin and told him my want of success. He merely remarked that the Frenchman was deficient in intelligence.

It just happened that it was the very day on which the appointment of the inspectorship was to be brought before the Senate. I went out to attend to my business (I ought to say "my pleasure"), and, as I did not return home till after midnight, I went to bed without seeing my father. In the morning I said in his presence that I intended to call upon L'Abbadie to congratulate him upon his appointment.

"You may spare yourself that trouble; the Senate has rejected his nomination."

"How so? Three days ago L'Abbadie felt sure of his success."

"He was right then, for he would have been appointed if I had not made up my mind to speak against him. I proved to the Senate that a right policy forbade the government to trust such an important post to a foreigner."

"I am much surprised, for Your Excellency was not of that opinion the day before yesterday."

"Very true, but then I did not know M. de L'Abbadie. I found out only yesterday that the man was not sufficiently intelligent to fill the position he was soliciting. Is he likely to possess a sane judgment when he refuses to lend you one hundred sequins? That refusal has cost him an important appointment and an income of three thousands crowns, which would now be his."

When I was taking my walk on the same day I met Zawoiski with L'Abbadie and did not try to avoid them. L'Abbadie was furious, and he had some reason to be.

"If you had told me," he said angrily, "that the one hundred sequins were intended as a gag to stop M. de Bragadin's mouth, I would have contrived to procure them for you."

"If you had had an inspector's brain you would have easily guessed it."

The Frenchman's resentment proved very useful to me because he related the circumstance to everybody. The result was that from that time those who wanted the patronage of the senator applied to me. Comment is needless; this sort of thing has long been in existence and will long remain so because very often, to obtain the highest of favours, all that is necessary is to obtain the good will of a minister's favourite or even of his valet. My debts were soon paid.

It was about that time that my brother Jean came to Venice with Guarienti, a converted Jew, a great judge of paintings, who was travelling at the expense of His Majesty the King of Poland, and Elector of Saxony. It was Guarienti who had purchased for His Majesty the gallery of the Duke of Modena for one hundred thousand sequins. He and my brother left Venice for Rome, where Jean remained in the studio of the celebrated painter Raphael Mengs, whom we shall meet again hereafter.

Now, as a faithful historian, I must give my readers the story of a certain adventure in which were involved the honour and happiness of one of the most charming women in Italy, who would have been unhappy if I had not been a thoughtless fellow.

In the early part of October, 1746, the theatres being open, I was walking about with my mask on when I perceived a woman, whose head was well enveloped in the hood of her mantle, getting out of the Ferrara barge, which had just arrived. Seeing her alone and observing her uncertain walk, I felt myself drawn towards her as if an unseen hand had guided me.

I come up to her and offer my services if I can be of any use to her. She answers timidly that she only wants to make some inquiries.

"We are not here in the right place for conversation," I say to her, "but, if you would be kind enough to come with me to a café, you would be able to speak and to explain your wishes."

She hesitates, I insist, and she gives way. The tavern is close at hand; we go in and are alone in a private room. I take off my mask, and out of politeness she must put down the hood of her mantle. A large muslin headdress conceals half of her face, but her eyes, her nose and her pretty mouth are enough to let me see on her features beauty, nobleness, sorrow and that candour which gives youth such an undefinable charm. I need not say that, with such a good letter of introduction, the unknown one at once captivates my warmest interest. After wiping away a few tears which are flowing in spite of all her efforts, she tells me that she belongs to a noble family, that she has run away from her father's house alone, trusting in God, to find a Venetian nobleman who had seduced her and then deceived her, thus sealing her everlasting misery.

"You have, then, some hope of recalling him to the path of duty? I suppose he has promised you marriage?"

"He has engaged his faith to me in writing. The only favour I claim from your kindness is to take me to his house, to leave me there and to keep my secret."

"You may trust, madame, to the feelings of a man of honour. I am worthy of your trust. Have entire confidence in me, for I already take a deep interest in all your concerns. Tell me his name."

"Alas! sir, I give way to fate."

With these words, she takes out of her bosom a paper which she gives me; I recognise the handwriting of Zanetto Steffani. It was a promise of marriage by which he engaged his word of honour to marry within a week, in Venice, the young countess A— S—. When I had read the paper, I returned it to her, saying that I knew the writer quite well, that he was connected with the chancellor's office, known as a great libertine and deeply in debt, but that he would be rich after his mother's death.

"For God's sake, take me to his house."

"I will do anything you wish; but have entire confidence in me and be good enough to hear me. I advise you not to go to his house. He has already done you great injury, and, even supposing that you should happen to find him at home, he might be capable of receiving you badly; if he should not be at home, it is most likely that his mother would not exactly welcome you if you should tell her who you are and what is your errand. Trust to me and be quite certain that God has sent me in your path to assist you. I promise you that to-morrow at the latest you shall know whether Steffani is in Venice, what he intends to do with you and what we may compel him to do. Until then my advice is, not to let him know of your arrival in Venice."

"Good God! where shall I go to-night?"

"To a respectable house, of course."

"I will go to yours, if you are married."

"I am a bachelor."

I knew an honest widow who resided in a lane and had two furnished rooms. I persuade the young countess to follow me, and we take a gondola. As we are gliding along, she tells me that one month before Steffani had stopped in her neighbourhood for necessary repairs to his travelling carriage, and that on the same day he had made her acquaintance at a house where she had gone with her mother for the purpose of offering their congratulations to a newly married lady.

"I was unfortunate enough," she continued, "to inspire him with love, and he postponed his departure. He remained one month in C—, never going out but in the evening and spending every night under my windows conversing with me. He swore a thousand times that he adored me, that his intentions were honourable. I entreated him to present himself to my parents to ask me in marriage, but he always excused himself by alleging some reasons, good or bad, assuring me that he could not be happy unless I showed him entire confidence. He

would beg of me to make up my mind to run away with him, unknown to everybody, promising that my honour should not suffer from such a step because three days after my departure everybody should receive notice of my being his wife, and he assured me that he would bring me back on a visit to my native place shortly after our marriage. Alas, sir! what shall I say now? Love blinded me; I fell into the abyss; I believed him; I agreed to everything. He gave me the paper which you have read, and the following night I allowed him to come into my room through the window under which he was in the habit of conversing with me. I consented to be guilty of a crime which I believed would be atoned for within three days, and he left me, promising that the next night he would be again under my window, ready to receive me in his arms. Could I possibly entertain any doubt after the fearful crime I had committed for him? I prepared a small parcel and waited for his coming, but in vain. Oh! what a cruel long night it was! In the morning I heard that the monster had gone away with his servant one hour after sealing my shame. You may imagine my despair! I adopted the only plan that despair could suggest, and that, of course, was not the right one. One hour before midnight I left my father's roof alone, thus completing my dishonour, but resolved on death if the man who has cruelly robbed me of my most precious treasure and whom a natural instinct told me I could find here, does not restore to me the honour which he alone can give me back. I walked all night and nearly the whole day without taking any food, until I got into the barge, which brought me here in twenty-four hours. I travelled in the boat with five men and two women, but no one saw my face or heard my voice; I kept constantly sitting down in a corner, holding my head down, half-asleep and with this prayer book in my hands. I was left alone, no one spoke to me, and I thanked God for it. When I landed on the wharf, you did not give me time to think how I could find out the dwelling of my perfidious seducer, but you may imagine the impression produced upon me by the sudden apparition of a masked man who, abruptly and as if placed there purposely by Providence, offered me his services; it seemed to me that you had guessed my distress, and, far from experiencing any repugnance, I felt that I was acting rightly in trusting myself in your hands, in spite of all prudence, which, perhaps, ought to have made me turn a deaf ear to your words and refuse the invitation to enter alone with you the house to which you took me.

"You know all now, sir, but I entreat you not to judge me too severely; I have been virtuous all through my life; one month ago I had never committed a fault which could call a blush upon my face, and the bitter tears which I shed every day will, I hope, wash out my crime in the eyes of God. I have been carefully brought up, but love and the want of experience have thrown me into the abyss. I am in your hands, and I feel certain that I shall have no cause to repent it."

I needed all she had just told me to confirm me in the interest

which I had felt in her from the first moment. I told her unsparingly that Steffani had seduced and abandoned her of malice aforethought, and that she ought to think of him only to be revenged of his perfidy. My words made her shudder, and she buried her beautiful face in her hands.

We reached the widow's house; I established her in a pretty, comfortable room and ordered some supper for her, desiring the good landlady to show her every attention and to let her want for nothing. I then took an affectionate leave of her, promising to see her early in the morning.

On leaving this interesting but hapless girl, I proceeded to the house of Steffani. I heard from one of his mother's gondoliers that he had returned to Venice three days before, but that twenty-four hours after his return he had gone away again without any servant, and nobody knew his whereabouts, not even his mother. The same evening, happening to be seated next to an abbé from Bologna at the theatre, I asked him several questions respecting the family of my unfortunate *protégée*; the abbé being intimately acquainted with them, I gathered from him all the information I required and, amongst other things, heard that the young countess had a brother, then an officer in the papal service.

Very early the next morning I called upon her. She was still asleep. The widow told me that she had made a pretty good supper but without speaking a single word, and that she had locked herself up in her room immediately afterwards. As soon as she had opened her door, I entered her room and, cutting short her apologies for having kept me waiting, informed her of all I had heard.

Her features bore the stamp of deep sorrow, but she looked calmer, and her complexion was no longer pale. She thought it unlikely that Steffani would have left for any other place but C—. Admitting the possibility that she might be right, I immediately offered to go to C— myself and return without loss of time, to fetch her in case Steffani should be there. Without giving her time to answer, I told her all the particulars I had learned concerning her honourable family, which caused her real satisfaction.

"I have no objection," she said, "to your going to C—, and I thank you for the generosity of your offer, but I beg you will postpone your journey. I still hope that Steffani will return, and then I can make a decision."

"I think you are quite right," I said. "Will you allow me to have some breakfast with you?"

"Do you suppose I could refuse you?"

"I should be very sorry to disturb you in any way. How did you use to amuse yourself at home?"

"I am very fond of books and music; my harpsichord was my delight."

I left her after breakfast and came back in the evening with a basket full of good books and music, and I sent her an excellent

harpsichord. My kindness embarrassed her, but I surprised her much more when I took out of my pocket three pairs of slippers. She blushed and thanked me with great feeling. She had walked a long distance, her shoes were evidently worn out, her feet sore, and she appreciated the delicacy of my present. As I had no improper design with regard to her, I enjoyed her gratitude and felt pleased at the idea she evidently entertained of my kind attentions. I had no other purpose in view but to restore calm to her mind and to obliterate the bad opinion which the unworthy Steffani had given her of men in general. I never thought of inspiring her with love for me, and I had not the slightest idea that I might fall in love with her. She was unhappy, and her unhappiness—a sacred thing in my eyes—called all the more for my most honourable sympathy because, without knowing me, she had given me her entire confidence. Situated as she was, I could not suppose her heart susceptible of harbouring a new affection, and I would have despised myself if I had tried to seduce her by any means in my power.

I remained with her only a quarter of an hour, being unwilling that my presence should trouble her at such a moment, as she seemed to be at a loss how to thank me and to express all her gratitude.

I was thus engaged in a rather delicate adventure, the end of which I could not possibly foresee, but my warmth for my *protégée* did not cool down, and, having no difficulty in procuring the means to keep her, I had no wish to see the last scene of the romance. That singular meeting, which gave me the priceless opportunity of finding myself endowed with generous dispositions stronger even than my love for pleasure, flattered my self-love more than I could express. I was then trying a great experiment, and, conscious that I wanted sadly to study myself, I gave up all my energies to acquire the great science of "Know thyself."

On the third day, in the midst of expressions of gratitude which I could not succeed in stopping, she told me that she could not conceive why I showed her so much sympathy because I ought to have formed but a poor opinion of her in consequence of the readiness with which she had followed me into the café. She smiled when I answered that I could not understand how I had succeeded in giving her so great a confidence in my virtue when I appeared before her with a mask on my face, in a costume which did not indicate a very virtuous character.

"It was easy for me, madame," I continued, "to guess that you were a beauty in distress when I observed your youth, the nobleness of your countenance and, more than all, your candour. The stamp of truth was so well affixed to the first words you uttered that I could not have the shadow of a doubt left in me as to your being the unhappy victim of the most natural feelings; and, as to your having abandoned your home through a sentiment of honour, your fault was that of a warm heart seduced by love, over which reason could have no sway, and your flight—the action of a soul crying for reparation or

for revenge—fully justifies you. Your cowardly seducer must pay with his life the penalty due to his crime, and he ought never to receive, by marrying you, an unjust reward, for he is not worthy of possessing you after degrading himself by the vilest conduct.”

“Everything you say is true. My brother, I hope, will avenge me.”

“You are greatly mistaken if you imagine that Steffani will fight your brother; Steffani is a coward who will never expose himself to an honourable death.”

As I was speaking, she put her hand in her pocket and drew forth after a few moments’ consideration a stiletto six inches long, which she placed on the table.

“What is this?” I exclaimed.

“It is a weapon which I reckoned until now to use against myself in case I should not succeed in obtaining reparation for the crime I have committed. But you have opened my eyes. Take away, I entreat you, this stiletto, which henceforth is useless to me. I trust in your friendship, and I have an inward certainty that I shall be indebted to you for my honour as well as for my life.”

I was struck with the words she had just uttered, and I felt that those words, as well as her looks, had found their way to my heart, besides enlisting my generous sympathy. I took the stiletto and left her with so much agitation that I had to acknowledge the weakness of my heroism, which I was very near turning into ridicule; yet I had the wonderful strength to perform, at least by halves, the character of a Cato until the seventh day.

I must explain how a certain suspicion of the young lady arose in my mind. That doubt was heavy on my heart, for, if it had proved true, I should have been a dupe, and the idea was humiliating. She had told me that she was a musician; I had immediately sent her a harpsichord, and yet, although the instrument had been at her disposal for three days, she had not opened it once, for the widow had told me so. It seemed to me that the best way to thank me for my attentive kindness would have been to give me a specimen of her musical talent. Had she deceived me? If so, she would lose my esteem. But, unwilling to form a hasty judgment, I kept on my guard, with a firm determination to make good use of the first opportunity that might present itself to clear up my doubts.

I called upon her the next day after dinner, which was not my usual time, having resolved on creating the opportunity myself. I caught her seated before a toilette glass, while the widow dressed the most beautiful auburn hair I had ever seen. I tendered my apologies for my sudden appearance at an unusual hour; she excused herself for not having completed her toilette, and the widow went on with her work. It was the first time I had seen the whole of her face, her neck and half of her arms, which the graces themselves had moulded. I remained in silent contemplation. I praised, quite by chance, the perfume of the pomatum, and the widow took the opportunity of telling her that she had spent in combs, powder and pomatum the three

livres she had received from her. I recollected then that she had told me the first day that she had left C— with ten paoli. I blushed for very shame, for I ought to have thought of that.

As soon as the widow had dressed the young girl's hair, she left the room to prepare some coffee for us. I took up a ring which had been laid by her on the toilette table and saw that it contained a portrait exactly like her; I was amused at the singular fancy she had had of having her likeness taken in a man's costume, with black hair. "You are mistaken," she said, "it is a portrait of my brother. He is two years older than I and is an officer in the papal army."

I begged her permission to put the ring on her finger; she consented, and, when I tried out of mere gallantry to kiss her hand, she drew it back, blushing. I feared she might be offended, and I assured her of my respect.

"Ah, sir!" she answered, "in the situation in which I am placed, I must think of defending myself against my own self much more than against you."

The compliment struck me as so fine and so complimentary to me that I thought it better not to take it up, but she could easily read in my eyes that she would never find me ungrateful for whatever feelings she might entertain in my favour. Yet I felt my love taking such proportions that I did not know how to keep it a mystery any longer.

Soon after that, as she was again thanking me for the books I had given her, saying that I had guessed her taste exactly because she did not like novels, she added, "I owe you an apology for not having sung to you yet, knowing that you are fond of music." These words made me breathe freely; without waiting for any answer, she sat down before the instrument and played several pieces with a facility, with a precision, with an expression of which no words could convey any idea. I was in ecstasy. I entreated her to sing; after some little ceremony, she took one of the music books I had given her and sang at sight in a manner which fairly ravished me. I begged that she would allow me to kiss her hand, and she did not say "yes," but, when I took it and pressed my lips on it, she did not oppose any resistance; I had the courage to smother my ardent desires, and the kiss I imprinted on her lovely hand was a mixture of tenderness, respect and admiration.

I took leave of her, smitten, full of love and almost determined on declaring my passion. Reserve becomes silliness when we know that our affection is returned by the woman we love, but as yet I was not quite sure.

The disappearance of Steffani was the talk of Venice, but I did not inform the charming countess of that circumstance. It was generally supposed that his mother had refused to pay his debts and that he had run away to avoid his creditors. It was very possible. But, whether he returned or not, I could not make up my mind to lose the precious treasure I had in my hands. Yet I did not see in what manner,

in what capacity I could enjoy that treasure, and I found myself in a regular maze. Sometimes I had an idea of consulting my kind father, but I would soon abandon it with fear, for I had made a trial of his empiric treatment in the Rinaldi affair and still more in the case of L'Abbadie. His remedies frightened me to that extent that I would rather remain ill than be cured by their means.

One morning I was foolish enough to inquire from the widow whether the lady had asked her who I was. What an egregious blunder! I saw it when the good woman, instead of answering me, said, "Does she not know who you are?"

"Answer me, and do not ask questions," I said, in order to hide my confusion.

The worthy woman was right; through my stupidity she would now feel curious; the tittle-tattle of the neighbourhood would of course take up the affair and discuss it; and all through my thoughtlessness! It was an unpardonable blunder. One ought never to be more careful than in addressing questions to half-educated persons. During the fortnight that she had passed under my protection, the countess had shown no curiosity whatever to know anything about me, but it did not prove that she was not curious on the subject. If I had been wise, I should have told her the very first day who I was, but I made up for my mistake that evening better than anybody else could have done it, and, after having told her all about myself, I entreated her forgiveness for not having done so sooner. Thanking me for my confidence, she confessed how curious she had been to know me better, and she assured me that she would never have been imprudent enough to ask any questions about me from her landlady. Women have a more delicate, a surer tact than men, and her last words were a home-thrust for me.

Our conversation having turned to the extraordinary absence of Steffani, she said that her father must necessarily believe her to be hiding with him somewhere. "He must have found out," she added, "that I was in the habit of conversing with him every night from my window, and he must have heard of my having embarked for Venice on board the Ferrara barge. I feel certain that my father is now in Venice, making secretly every effort to discover me. When he visits this city, he always puts up at Boncousin; will you ascertain whether he is there?"

She never pronounced Steffani's name without disgust and hatred, and she said she would bury herself in a convent, far away from her native place, where no one could be acquainted with her shameful history.

I intended to make some inquiries the next day, but it was not necessary for me to do so, for in the evening at supper-time M. Barbaro said to us:

"A nobleman, a subject of the Pope, has been recommended to me and wishes me to assist him with my influence in a rather delicate and intricate matter. One of our citizens has, it appears, carried off

his daughter and has been hiding somewhere with her for the last fortnight, but nobody knows where. The affair ought to be brought before the Council of Ten, but the mother of the ravisher claims to be a relative of mine, and I do not intend to interfere."

I pretended to take no interest in M. Barbaro's words, and early the next morning I went to the young countess to tell her the interesting news. She was still asleep; but, being in a hurry, I sent the widow to say that I wanted to see her only for two minutes in order to communicate something of great importance. She received me, covering herself up to the chin with the bedclothes

As soon as I had informed her of all I knew, she entreated me to enlist M. Barbaro as a mediator between herself and her father, assuring me that she would rather die than become the wife of the monster who had dishonoured her. I undertook to do it, and she gave me the promise of marriage used by the deceiver to seduce her, so that it could be shown to her father.

In order to obtain M. Barbaro's mediation in favour of the young countess, it would have been necessary to tell him that she was under my protection, and I felt it would injure my *protégée*. I made no decision at first, and most likely one of the reasons for my hesitation was that I saw myself on the point of losing her, which was particularly repugnant to my feelings.

After dinner Count A— S— was announced as wishing to see M. Barbaro. He came in with his son, the living portrait of his sister. M. Barbaro took them to his study to talk the matter over, and within an hour they had taken leave. As soon as they had gone, the excellent M. Barbaro asked me, as I had expected, to consult my heavenly spirit and ascertain whether he would be right in interfering in favour of Count A— S—. He wrote the question himself, and I gave the following answer with the utmost coolness:

"You ought to interfere, but only to advise the father to forgive his daughter and give up all idea of compelling her to marry her ravisher, for Steffani has been sentenced to death by the will of God."

The answer seemed wonderful to the three friends, and I was myself surprised at my boldness, but I had a foreboding that Steffani was to meet his death at the hands of somebody; love might have given birth to that presentiment. M. de Bragadin, who believed my oracle infallible, observed that it had never given such a clear answer and that Steffani was certainly dead. He said to M. de Barbaro:

"You had better invite the count and his son to dinner here to-morrow. You must act slowly and prudently; it would be necessary to know where the daughter is before you endeavour to make the father forgive her."

M. Barbaro very nearly made me drop my serious countenance by telling me that, if I would try my oracle, I could let them know at once where the girl was. I answered that I would certainly ask my spirit on the morrow, thus gaining time in order to ascertain beforehand the disposition of the father and of his son. But I could not help laughing, for

I had placed myself under the necessity of sending Steffani to the next world if the reputation of my oracle was to be maintained.

I spent the evening with the young countess, who entertained no doubt either of her father's indulgence or of the entire confidence she could repose in me.

What delight the charming girl experienced when she heard that I was to dine the next day with her father and brother and that I would tell her every word that would be said about her! But what happiness it was for me to see her convinced that she was right in loving me and that, but for me, she would certainly have been lost in a town where the policy of the government tolerates debauchery as a solitary species of individual freedom. We congratulated each other upon our fortuitous meeting and upon the conformity in our tastes, which we thought truly wonderful. We were greatly pleased that her easy acceptance of my invitation or my promptness in persuading her to follow and trust me could not be ascribed to the mutual attraction of our features, for I was masked and her hood was then as good as a mask. We entertained no doubt that everything had been arranged by Heaven to get us acquainted and to fire us both, even unknown to ourselves, with love for each other.

"Confess," I said to her, in a moment of enthusiasm and as I was covering her hand with kisses, "confess that, if you found me to be in love with you, you would fear me."

"Alas! my only fear is to lose you."

That confession, the truth of which was made evident by her voice and by her looks, proved the electric spark which ignited the latent fire. Folding her rapidly in my arms, pressing my mouth on her lips, reading in her beautiful eyes neither a proud indignation nor the cold compliance which might have been the result of a fear of losing me, I gave way entirely to the sweet inclination of love, and, swimming already in a sea of delights, I felt my enjoyment increased a hundredfold when I saw on the countenance of the beloved creature who shared it the expression of happiness, of love, of modesty and of sensibility which enhances the charm of the greatest triumph.

She had scarcely recovered her composure when she cast her eyes down and sighed deeply. Thinking that I knew the cause of it, I threw myself on my knees before her and, speaking to her words of the warmest affection, begged, entreated her to forgive me.

"What offence have I to forgive you for, dear friend? You have not rightly interpreted my thoughts. Your love caused me to think of my happiness, and in that moment a cruel recollection drew that sigh from me. Pray rise from your knees."

Midnight had struck already; I told her that her good name made it necessary for me to go away; I put my mask on and left the house. I was so surprised, so amazed at having obtained a felicity of which I did not think myself worthy that my departure must have appeared rather abrupt to her. I could not sleep; I passed one of those disturbed nights during which the imagination of an amorous young man is unceasingly

running after the shadows of reality. I had tasted, but not savoured, that happy reality, and all my being was longing for her who alone could make my enjoyment complete. In that nocturnal drama love and imagination were the two principal actors; hope, in the background, performed only a dumb part. People may say what they please on that subject, but hope is in fact nothing but a deceitful flatterer accepted by reason only because it is often in need of palliatives. Happy are those men who, to enjoy life to the fullest extent, require neither hope nor foresight.

In the morning, recollecting the sentence of death which I had passed on Steffani, I felt somewhat embarrassed about it. I wished I could have recalled it, as well for the honour of my oracle, which was seriously implicated by it, as for the sake of Steffani himself, whom I did not hate half so much since I was indebted to him for the treasure in my possession.

The count and his son came to dinner. The father was simple, artless, and unceremonious. It was easy to read on his countenance the grief he felt at the unpleasant adventure of his daughter and his anxiety to settle the affair honourably, but no anger could be traced on his features or in his manners. The son, as handsome as the God of Love, had wit and great nobility of manner. His easy, unaffected carriage pleased me, and, wishing to win his friendship, I showed him every attention.

After the dessert M. Barbaro contrived to persuade the count that we were four persons with but one head and one heart, and the worthy nobleman spoke to us without any reserve. He praised his daughter very highly; he assured us that Steffani had never entered his house, and therefore he could not conceive by what spell, speaking to his daughter only at night and from the street under the window, he had succeeded in seducing her to such an extent as to make her leave her home alone on foot two days after he had himself left in his post-chaise.

"Then," observed M. Barbaro, "it is impossible to be certain that he actually seduced her or to prove that she went off with him."

"Very true, sir; but, although it cannot be proved, there is no doubt of it, and, now that no one knows where Steffani is, he can be nowhere but with her. I only want him to marry her."

"It strikes me that it would be better not to insist upon a compulsory marriage which would seal your daughter's misery, for Steffani is in every respect one of the most worthless young men we have amongst our government clerks."

"Were I in your place," said M. de Bragadin, "I would let my daughter's repentance disarm my anger, and I would forgive her."

"Where is she? I am ready to fold her in my arms; but how can I believe in her repentance when it is evident that she is still with him?"

"Is it quite certain that in leaving C— she proceeded to this city?"

"I have it from the master of the barge himself, and she landed within twenty yards of the Roman Gate. An individual wearing a mask

was waiting for her, joined her at once, and they both disappeared without leaving any trace of their whereabouts."

"Very likely it was Steffani waiting there for her."

"No, for he is short, and the man with the mask was tall. Besides, I have heard that Steffani had left Venice two days before the arrival of my daughter. The man must have been some friend of Steffani's and he has taken her to him."

"But, my dear count, all this is mere supposition."

"There are four persons who have seen the man with the mask and pretend to know him: only they do not agree. Here is a list of four names, and I will accuse these four persons before the Council of Ten if Steffani should deny having my daughter in his possession."

The list, which he handed to M. Barbaro, gave not only the names of the four accused persons but likewise those of their accusers. The last name, which M. Barbaro read, was mine. When I heard it, I shrugged my shoulders in a manner which caused the three friends to laugh heartily.

M. de Bragadin, seeing the surprise of the count at such uncalled-for mirth, said to him, "This is Casanova, my son, and I give you my word of honour that, if your daughter is in his hands, she is perfectly safe, although he may not look exactly the sort of man to whom young girls should be trusted."

The surprise, the amazement and the perplexity of the count and his son were an amusing picture. The loving father begged me to excuse him, with tears in his eyes telling me to place myself in his position. My only answer was to embrace him most affectionately.

The man who had recognised me was a noted pimp whom I had thrashed some time before for having deceived me. If I had not been there just in time to take care of the young countess, she would not have escaped him, and he would have ruined her forever by taking her to some house of ill-fame.

The result of the meeting was that the count agreed to postpone his application to the Council of Ten until Steffani's place of refuge should be discovered.

"I have not seen Steffani for six months, sir," I said to the count, "but I promise you to kill him in a duel as soon as he returns."

"You shall not do it," answered the young count, very coolly, "unless he kills me first."

"Gentlemen," exclaimed M. de Bragadin, "I can assure you that you will neither of you fight a duel with him, for Steffani is dead."

"Dead!" said the count.

"We must not," observed the prudent Barbaro, "take that word in its literal sense, but the wretched man is dead to all honour and self-respect."

After that truly dramatic scene, during which I could guess that the *dénouement* of the play was near at hand, I went to my charming countess, taking care to change my gondola three times—a necessary precaution to baffle spies.

I gave my anxious mistress an exact account of all the conversation. She was very impatient for my coming and wept tears of joy when I repeated her father's words of forgiveness; but, when I told her that nobody knew of Steffani having entered her chamber, she fell on her knees and thanked God. I then repeated her brother's words, imitating his coolness: "You shall not kill him, unless he kills me first." She kissed me tenderly, calling me her guardian angel, her saviour, and weeping in my arms. I promised to bring her brother on the following day or the day after that at the latest. We had our supper, but we did not talk of Steffani or of revenge, and after that pleasant meal we devoted two hours to the worship of the God of Love.

I left her at midnight, promising to return early in the morning, my reason for not remaining all night with her being that the landlady might, if necessary, swear without scruple that I had never spent a night with the young girl. It proved a very lucky inspiration of mine, for, when I arrived home, I found the three friends waiting impatiently for me in order to impart to me wonderful news which M. de Bragadin had heard at the sitting of the Senate.

"Steffani," said M. de Bragadin to me, "is dead, as our angel *Paralis* revealed it to us; he is dead to the world, for he has become a Capuchin friar. The Senate, as a matter of course, has been informed of it. We alone are aware that it is a punishment which God has visited upon him. Let us worship the Author of all things and the heavenly hierarchy which renders us worthy of knowing what remains a mystery to all men. Now we must achieve our undertaking and console the poor father. We must inquire from *Paralis* where the girl is; she cannot now be with Steffani; of course, God has not condemned her to become a Capuchin nun."

"I need not consult my angel, dearest father, for it is by his express orders that I have been compelled until now to make a mystery of the refuge found by the young countess."

I related the whole story, except what they had no business to know, for in the opinion of the worthy men, who had paid heavy tribute to Love, all intrigues were fearful crimes. M. Dandolo and M. Barbaro expressed their surprise when they heard that the young girl had been under my protection for a fortnight, but M. de Bragadin said that he was not astonished, that it was according to cabalistic science and that he knew it.

"We must only," he added, "keep up the mystery of his daughter's place of refuge for the count, until we know for a certainty that he will forgive her and take her with him to C— or to any other place where he may wish to live hereafter."

"He cannot refuse to forgive her," I said, "when he finds that the amiable girl would never have left C— if her seducer had not given her this promise of marriage in his own handwriting. She walked as far as the barge and landed at the very moment I was passing the Roman Gate. An inspiration from above told me to accost her and to invite her to follow me. She obeyed, as if she were fulfilling the decree of Heaven,

I took her to a refuge impossible to discover and placed her under the care of a God-fearing woman."

My three friends listened to me so attentively that they looked like three statues. I advised them to invite the count to dinner for the day after next because I needed some time to consult *Paralis de modo tenendi*. I then told M. Barbaro to let the count know in what sense he was to understand Steffani's death. He undertook to do it, and we retired to rest.

I slept only four or five hours and, dressing myself quickly, hurried to my beloved mistress. I told the widow not to serve the coffee until we called for it because we wanted to remain quiet and undisturbed for some hours, having several important letters to write.

I found the lovely countess in bed but awake, her eyes beaming with happiness and contentment. For a fortnight I had seen her only sad, melancholy and thoughtful, her pleased countenance, which I naturally ascribed to my influence, filled me with joy. We commenced as all happy lovers always do and were both unsparing of the mutual proofs of our love, tenderness and gratitude.

After our delightful amorous sport I told her the news, but love had so completely taken possession of her pure and sensitive soul that what had been important was now only an accessory. But the news of her seducer having turned a Capuchin friar filled her with amazement, and, passing very sensible remarks on the extraordinary event, she pitied Steffani. When we can feel pity, we love no longer, but a feeling of pity succeeding love is the characteristic only of a great and generous mind. She was much pleased with me for having informed my three friends of her being under my protection, and she left to my care all the necessary arrangements for obtaining a reconciliation with her father.

Now and then we recollected that the time of our separation was near at hand. Our grief was bitter, but we contrived to forget it in the ecstasy of our amorous enjoyment.

"Ah! why can we not belong forever to each other?" the charming girl would exclaim. "It is not my acquaintance with Steffani, it is your loss which will seal my eternal misery."

But it was necessary to bring our delightful interview to a close, for the hours were flying with fearful rapidity. I left her happy, her eyes wet with tears of intense felicity.

At the dinner-table M. Barbaro told me that he had paid a visit to his relative, Steffani's mother, and that she had not appeared sorry at the decision taken by her son, although he was her only child.

"He had the choice," she said, "between killing himself and turning friar, and he took the wiser course."

The woman spoke like a good Christian, and she professed to be one; but she spoke like an unfeeling mother, and she was truly one, for she was wealthy and, if she had not been cruelly avaricious, her son would not have been reduced to the fearful alternative of committing suicide or becoming a Capuchin friar.

The last and most serious motive which caused the despair of Steffani,

who is still alive, remained a mystery for everybody. My *Memoirs* will raise the veil when no one will care anything about it.

The count and his son were, of course, greatly surprised, and the event made them still more desirous of discovering the young lady. In order to obtain a clue to her place of refuge, the count had resolved on summoning before the Council of Ten all the parties, accused and accusing, whose names he had on his list, with the exception of myself. His determination made it necessary for us to inform him that his daughter was in my hands, and M. de Bragadin undertook to let him know the truth.

We were all invited to supper by the count, and we went to his hostelry, with the exception of M. de Bragadin, who had declined the invitation. I was thus prevented from seeing my divinity that evening; but early the next morning I made up for lost time, and, as it had been decided that her father would on that very day be informed of her being under my care, we remained together until noon. We had no hope of contriving another meeting, for I had promised to bring her brother in the afternoon.

The count and his son dined with us, and after dinner M. de Bragadin said, "I have joyful news for you, count; your beloved daughter has been found!"

What an agreeable surprise for the father and son! M. de Bragadin handed them the promise of marriage written by Steffani and said:

"This, gentlemen, evidently brought your lovely young lady to the verge of madness when she found that he had gone from C— without her. She left your house alone on foot, and, as she landed in Venice, Providence threw her in the way of this young man, who induced her to follow him and has placed her under the care of an honourable woman, whom she has not left since, whom she will leave only to fall into your arms as soon as she is certain of your forgiveness for the folly she has committed."

"Oh! let her have no doubt of my forgiving her," exclaimed the father in the ecstasy of joy, and, turning to me, "Dear sir, I beg of you not to delay the fortunate moment on which the whole happiness of my life depends."

I embraced him warmly, saying that his daughter would be restored to him on the following day and that I would let his son see her that very afternoon, so as to give him an opportunity of preparing her by degrees for that happy reconciliation. M. Barbaro desired to accompany us, and the young man, approving all my arrangements, embraced me, swearing everlasting friendship and gratitude.

We went out, all three together, and a gondola carried us in a few minutes to the place where I was guarding a treasure more precious than the golden apples of the Hesperides. But, alas! I was on the point of losing that treasure, the remembrance of which causes me even now a delicious trembling.

I preceded my two companions in order to prepare my lovely young friend for the visit, and, when I told her that, according to my arrange-

ments, her father would not see her till on the following day, "Ah!" she exclaimed with the accent of true happiness, "then we can spend a few more hours together! Go, dearest, go and bring my brother."

I returned with my companions; but how can I paint that truly dramatic situation? Oh! how inferior art must ever be to nature! The fraternal love; the delight beaming upon those two beautiful faces, with a slight shade of embarrassment on that of the sister; the pure joy shining in the midst of their tender caresses; the most eloquent exclamations, followed by a still more eloquent silence; their loving looks, which seem like flashes of lightning in the midst of the dew of tears; a thought of politeness which brings blushes on her countenance when she recollects that she has forgotten her duty towards a nobleman whom she sees for the first time; and finally there was my part, not a speaking one, but yet the most important of all—the whole formed a living picture to which the most skilful painter could not have rendered full justice.

We sat down at last, the young countess between her brother and M. Barbaro on the sofa; I, opposite to her, on a low footstool.

"To whom, dear sister, are we indebted for the happiness of having found you again?"

"To my guardian angel," she answered, giving me her hand, "to this generous man, who was waiting for me as if Heaven had sent him with the special mission of watching over your sister; it is he who has saved me, who has prevented me from falling into the gulf which yawned under my feet, who has rescued me from the shame threatening me, of which I had then no conception; it is to him I am indebted for all, to him who, as you see, kisses my hand now for the first time."

And she pressed her handkerchief to her beautiful eyes to dry her tears, but ours were flowing at the same time.

Such is true virtue, which never loses its nobleness, even when modesty compels it to utter some innocent falsehood. But the charming girl had no idea of being guilty of an untruth. It was a pure, virtuous soul which was then speaking through her lips, and she allowed it to speak. Her virtue seemed to whisper to her that, in spite of her errors, it had never deserted her. A young girl who gives way to a real feeling of love cannot be guilty of a crime or be exposed to remorse.

Towards the end of our friendly visit she said that she longed to throw herself at her father's feet, but that she wished to see him only in the evening, so as not to give any opportunity to the gossips of the place; and it was agreed that the meeting, which was to be the last scene of the drama, should take place the next day towards the evening.

We returned to the count's hostelry for supper, and the excellent man, fully persuaded that he was indebted to me for his honour as well as for his daughter's, looked at me with admiration, and spoke to me with gratitude. Yet he was not sorry to have ascertained himself, and before I had said so, that I had been the first man who had spoken to her after landing. Before parting in the evening, M. Barbaro invited them to dinner for the next day.

I went to my charming mistress very early the following morning, and, although there was some danger in protracting our interview, we did not give it a thought, or, if we did, it only caused us to make good use of the short time that we could still devote to love.

After having enjoyed, until our strength was almost expiring, the most delightful, the most intense voluptuousness in which mutual ardour can enfold two young, vigorous and passionate lovers, the young countess dressed and, kissing her slippers, said she would never part with them as long as she lived. I asked her to give me a lock of her hair, which she did at once; I meant to have it made into a chain like the one woven with the hair of Madame F—, which I still wore round my neck.

Towards dusk, the count and his son, M. Dandolo, M. Barbaro and myself, proceeded together to the abode of the young countess. The moment she saw her father, she threw herself on her knees before him, but the count, bursting into tears, took her in his arms, covered her with kisses and breathed over her words of forgiveness, of love and blessing. What a scene for a man of sensibility! An hour later we escorted the family to the inn, and, after wishing them a pleasant journey, I went back with my two friends to M. de Bragadin, to whom I gave a faithful account of what had taken place.

We thought that they had left Venice, but the next morning they called at the palace in a peotta with six rowers. The count said that they could not leave the city without seeing us once more, without thanking us again, and me particularly, for all we had done for them. M. de Bragadin, who had not seen the young countess before, was struck by her extraordinary likeness to her brother.

They partook of some refreshments and embarked in their peotta, which was to carry them in twenty-four hours to Ponte di Lago Oscuro, on the River Po near the frontiers of the Papal States. It was only with my eyes that I could express to the lovely girl all the feelings which filled my heart, but she understood the language, and I had no difficulty in interpreting the meaning of her looks.

Never did an introduction occur in better season than that of the count to M. Barbaro. It saved the honour of a respectable family, and it saved me from the unpleasant consequences of an interrogatory in the presence of the Council of Ten, during which I should have been convicted of having taken the young girl with me and compelled to say what I had done with her.

A few days afterwards we all proceeded to Padua, to remain in that city until the end of autumn. I was grieved not to find Doctor Gozzi in Padua; he had been appointed to a benefice in the country, and he was living there with Bettina; she had not been able to remain with the scoundrel who had married her only for the sake of her small dowry and had treated her very ill.

I did not like the quiet life of Padua, and, to avoid dying from ennui, I fell in love with a celebrated Venetian courtesan. Her name was Ancilla; some time after the well known dancer, Campioni, married her and took her to London, where she caused the death of a very

worthy Englishman. I shall have to mention her again in four years; now I have only to speak of a certain circumstance which brought my love adventure with her to a close after three or four weeks.

Count Medini, a young, thoughtless fellow like myself and with inclinations of much the same cast, had introduced me to Ancilla. The count was a confirmed gambler and a thorough enemy of fortune. There was a good deal of gambling going on in the house of Ancilla, whose favourite lover he was, and the fellow had presented me to his mistress only to give her the opportunity of making a dupe of me at the card table.

And, to tell the truth, I was a dupe at first; not thinking of any foul play, I accepted ill luck without complaining; but one day I caught them cheating. I took a pistol out of my pocket and, aiming at Medini's breast, threatened to kill him on the spot unless he refunded at once all the gold they had won from me. Ancilla fainted away, and the count, after refunding the money, challenged me to follow him out and measure swords. I placed my pistols on the table, and we went out. Reaching a convenient spot, we fought by the bright light of the moon, and I was fortunate enough to give him a gash across the shoulder. He could not move his arm and had to cry for mercy.

After that meeting I went to bed and slept quietly, but in the morning I related the whole affair to my father, and he advised me to leave Padua immediately, which I did.

Count Medini remained my enemy through all his life; I shall have occasion to speak of him again when I reach Naples.

The remainder of the year 1746 passed off quietly and without any events of importance. Fortune was now favourable to me and now adverse.

Towards the end of January, 1747, I received a letter from the young Countess A— S—, who had married the Marquis of —. She entreated me not to appear to know her if by chance I visited the town in which she resided, for she had the happiness of having linked her destiny to that of a man who had won her heart after he had obtained her hand.

I had already heard from her brother that after their return to C— her mother had taken her to the city from which her letter was written, and there, in the house of a relative with whom she was residing, she had made the acquaintance of the man who had taken upon himself the charge of her future welfare and happiness. I saw her one year afterwards, and, if it had not been for her letter, I should certainly have solicited an introduction to her husband. Yet peace of mind has greater charms even than love; but, when love is in the way, we do not think so.

For a fortnight I was the lover of a young Venetian girl, very handsome, whom her father, a certain Ramon, exposed to public admiration as a dancer at the theatre. I might have remained longer her captive, if marriage had not forcibly broken my chains. Her protectress, Madame Cecilia Valmarano, found her a very proper husband in the person of a French dancer called Binet, who had assumed the name of Binetti,

and thus his young wife had not to become a Frenchwoman; she soon won great fame in more ways than one. She was strangely privileged; time with its heavy hand seemed to have no power over her. She always appeared young, even in the eyes of the best judges of faded, bygone female beauty. Men, as a general rule, do not ask for anything more, and they are right in not racking their brains for the sake of being convinced that they are the dupes of external appearance. The last lover that the wonderful Binetti killed by excess of amorous enjoyment was a certain Mosciuski, a Pole, whom fate had brought to Venice seven or eight years ago; she had then reached her sixty-third year!

My life in Venice would have been pleasant and happy if I could have abstained from punting at basset. The *ridotti* were open only to noblemen, who had to appear without masks, in their patrician robes and wearing the immense wig which had become indispensable since the beginning of the century. I would play, and I was wrong, for I had neither prudence enough to leave off when fortune was adverse nor sufficient control over myself to stop when I had won. I was then gambling through a feeling of avarice. I was extravagant by taste and always regretted the money I had spent, unless it had been won at the gaming-table, for it was only in that case that the money had, in my opinion, cost me nothing.

At the end of January, finding myself under the necessity of procuring two hundred sequins, Madame Manzoni contrived to obtain for me from another woman the loan of a diamond ring worth five hundred. I made up my mind to go to Treviso, fifteen miles distant from Venice, to pawn the ring at the Mont de Piété, which there lends money upon valuables at the rate of five per cent. That useful establishment does not exist in Venice, where the Jews have always managed to keep the monopoly in their hands.

I got up early one morning and walked to the end of the Canale Regio, intending to engage a gondola to take me as far as Mestra, where I could take post-horses, reach Treviso in less than two hours, pledge my diamond ring and return to Venice the same evening.

As I passed along St. Job's Quay, I saw in a two-oared gondola a country girl beautifully dressed. I stopped to look at her; the gondoliers, supposing that I wanted an opportunity of reaching Mestra at a cheap rate, rowed back to the shore.

Observing the lovely face of the young girl, I do not hesitate, but jump into the gondola and pay double fare on condition that no more passengers are taken. An elderly priest was seated near the young girl, he rises to let me take his place, but I politely insist upon his keeping it.

CHAPTER 19

"THOSE gondoliers," said the elderly priest, addressing me in order to begin the conversation, "are very fortunate. They took us up at the Rialto for thirty soldi on condition that they would be allowed

to embark other passengers and here is one already; they will certainly find more."

"When I am in a gondola, reverend sir, there is no room left for any more passengers."

So saying, I give forty more soldi to the gondoliers, who, highly pleased with my generosity, thank me and call me "Excellency." The good priest, accepting that title as truly belonging to me, entreats my pardon for not having addressed me as such.

"I am not a Venetian nobleman, reverend sir, and I have no right to the title of *Eccellenza*."

"Ah!" says the young lady, "I am very glad of it."

"Why so, signora?"

"Because, when I find myself near a nobleman, I am afraid. But I suppose that you are an *illustrissimo*."

"Not even that, signora; I am only an advocate's clerk."

"So much the better, for I like to be in the company of persons who do not think themselves above me. My father was a farmer, brother of my uncle here, rector of P—, where I was born and bred. As I am an only daughter, I inherited my father's property after his death, and I shall likewise be heiress to my mother, who has been ill a long time and cannot live much longer, which causes me a great deal of sorrow; but it is the doctor who says it. Now, to return to my subject, I do not suppose that there is much difference between an advocate's clerk and the daughter of a rich farmer. I only say so for the sake of saying something, for I know very well that, in travelling, one must accept all sorts of companions; is it not so, uncle?"

"Yes, my dear Christine, and, as a proof, you see that this gentleman has accepted our company without knowing who or what we are."

"But do you think I would have come if I had not been attracted by the beauty of your lovely niece?"

At these words the good people burst out laughing. As I did not think that there was anything very comic in what I had said, I judged that my travelling companions were rather simple, and I was not sorry to find them so.

"Why do you laugh so heartily, beautiful *damigella*? Is it to show me your fine teeth? I confess that I have never seen such a splendid set in Venice."

"Oh, it is not that, sir, although everyone in Venice has paid me the same compliment. I can assure you that in P— all the girls have teeth as fine as mine. Is it not a fact, uncle?"

"Yes, my dear niece."

"I was laughing, sir, at a thing which I will never tell you."

"Oh! tell me, I entreat you."

"Oh! certainly not, never."

"I will tell you myself," says the curate.

"You will not," she exclaims, knitting her beautiful eyebrows. "If you do, I will go away."

"I defy you to do it, my dear. Do you know what she said, sir, when she saw you on the wharf? 'Here is a very handsome young man who is looking at me and would not be sorry to be with us.' And, when she saw that the gondoliers were putting back for you to embark, she was delighted."

While the uncle was speaking to me, the indignant niece was slapping him on the shoulder.

"Why are you angry, lovely Christine, at my hearing that you liked my appearance when I am so glad to let you know how truly charming I think you?"

"You are glad for a moment. Oh! I know the Venetians thoroughly now. They all told me that they were charmed with me, and not one of those I would have liked ever made a declaration to me."

"What sort of declaration did you want?"

"There's only one sort for me, sir; the declaration leading to a good marriage in church in the sight of all men. Yet we remained a fortnight in Venice, did we not, uncle?"

"This girl," said the uncle, "is a good match, for she possesses three thousand crowns. She has always said that she would marry only a Venetian, and I have accompanied her to Venice to give her an opportunity of being known. A worthy woman gave us hospitality for a fortnight and presented my niece in several houses where she made the acquaintance of marriageable young men; but those who pleased her would not hear of marriage, and those who would have been glad to marry did not take her fancy."

"But do you imagine, reverend sir, that marriages can be made like omelets? A fortnight in Venice—that is nothing; you ought to live there at least six months. Now, for instance, I think your niece sweetly pretty and should consider myself fortunate if the wife whom God intends for me were like her; but, even if she offered me now a dowry of fifty thousand crowns on condition that our wedding take place immediately, I would refuse her. A prudent young man wants to know the character of a girl before he marries her, for it is neither money nor beauty which can ensure happiness in married life."

"What do you mean by 'character'?" asked Christine. "Is it a beautiful handwriting?"

"No, my dear. I mean the qualities of the mind and the heart. I shall most likely get married some time, and I have been looking for a wife for the last three years, but am still looking in vain. I have known several young girls almost as lovely as you, and all with a good marriage portion, but after an acquaintance of two or three months I found out that they could not make me happy."

"In what were they deficient?"

"Well, I will tell you, because you are not acquainted with them, and there can be no indiscretion on my part. One whom I certainly would have married, for I loved her dearly, was extremely vain. She would have ruined me in fashionable clothes and by her love for luxuries. Fancy! she was in the habit of paying one sequin every month

to the hairdresser, and as much at least for pomatum and perfumes."

"She was a giddy, foolish girl. Now, I spend only ten soldi in one year on wax, which I mix with goat's grease, and there I have an excellent pomatum."

"Another, whom I would have married two years ago, laboured under a disease which would have made me unhappy; as soon as I knew of it, I ceased my visits."

"What disease was it?"

"A disease which would have prevented her from being a mother, and, if I get married, I wish to have children."

"All that is in God's hands, but I know that my health is excellent. Is it not, uncle?"

"Another was too devout, and that does not suit me. She was so over-scrupulous that she was in the habit of going to her confessor twice a week, and every time her confession lasted at least one hour. I want my wife to be a good Christian but not bigoted."

"She must have been a great sinner, or else she was very foolish. I confess only once a month and get through everything in two minutes. Is it not true, uncle? And, if you were to ask me any questions, uncle, I should not know what more to say."

"One young lady thought herself more learned than I, although she would every minute utter some absurdity. Another was always low-spirited, and my wife must be cheerful."

"Hark to that, uncle! You and my mother are always chiding me for my cheerfulness."

"Another, whom I did not court long, was always afraid of being alone with me, and, if I gave her a kiss, she would run and tell her mother."

"How silly she must have been! I have never yet listened to a lover, for we have only rude peasants in P—, but I know very well that there are some things which I would not tell my mother."

"One had a rank breath; another painted her face, and, indeed, almost every young girl is guilty of that fault. I am afraid marriage is out of the question for me, because, for instance, I want my wife to have black eyes, and in our days almost every woman colours them by art; but I cannot be deceived, for I am a good judge."

"Are mine black?"

"Ah! ah!"

"You are laughing?"

"I laugh because your eyes certainly appear to be black, but they are not so in reality. Never mind, you are very charming in spite of that."

"Now that is amusing. You pretend to be a good judge, yet you say that my eyes are dyed black. My eyes, sir, whether beautiful or ugly, are now the same as God made them. Is it not so, uncle?"

"I never had any doubt of it, my dear niece."

"And you do not believe me, sir?"

"No, they are too beautiful for me to believe them natural."

"Oh, dear me! I cannot bear it."

"Excuse me, my lovely *damigella*, I am afraid I have been too sincere"

After that quarrel we remained silent. The good curate smiled now and then, but his niece found it very hard to keep down her sorrow.

At intervals I stole a look at her face and could see that she was very near crying; I felt sorry, for she was a charming girl. In her hair, dressed in the fashion of wealthy countrywomen, she had more than one hundred sequins' worth of gold pins and arrows, which fastened the plaits of her long locks, as dark as ebony. Heavy gold earrings and a long chain, which was wound twenty times round her snowy neck, made a fine contrast to her complexion, on which the lilies and the roses were admirably blended. It was the first time that I had seen a country beauty in such splendid apparel. Six years before, Lucie at Paséan had captivated me, but in a different manner.

Christine did not utter a single word; she was in despair, for her eyes were truly of the greatest beauty, and I was cruel enough to attack them. She evidently hated me, and her anger alone kept back her tears. Yet I would not undeceive her, for I wanted her to bring matters to a climax.

When the gondola had entered the long canal of Marghera, I asked the clergyman whether he had a carriage to go to Treviso, through which place he had to pass to reach P—.

"I intended to walk," said the worthy man, "for my parish is poor and I am the same, but I will try to obtain a place for Christine in some carriage travelling that way."

"You would confer a real kindness on me if you would both accept a seat in my chaise; it holds four persons and there is plenty of room."

"It is a good fortune which we were far from expecting."

"Not at all, uncle; I will not go with this gentleman."

"Why not, my dear niece?"

"Because I will not."

"Such is the way," I remarked, without looking at her, "that sincerity is generally rewarded."

"Sincerity, sir! Nothing of the sort," she exclaimed, angrily, "it is sheer wickedness. There can be no true black eyes now for you in the world, but, as you like them, I am very glad of it."

"You are mistaken, lovely Christine, for I have the means of ascertaining the truth."

"What means?"

"Only to wash the eyes with a little lukewarm rose water; or, if the lady cries, the artificial colour is certain to be washed off."

At these words, the scene changed as if by the wand of a conjuror. The face of the charming girl, which had expressed nothing but indignation, spite and disdain, took an air of contentment and placidity delightful to witness. She smiled at her uncle, who was much pleased

with the change in her countenance, for the offer of the carriage had gone to his heart.

"Now you had better cry a little, my dear niece, and *il signore* will render full justice to your eyes."

Christine cried in reality, but it was immoderate laughter that made her tears flow.

That species of natural originality pleased me greatly; and, as we were going up the steps at the landing-place, I offered her my full apologies; she accepted the carriage. I ordered breakfast and told a *vetturino* to get a very handsome chaise ready while we had our meal, but the curate said that he must first of all go and say his mass.

"Very well, reverend sir, we will hear it, and you must say it for my benefit."

I put a silver ducat in his hand.

"It is what I am in the habit of giving," I observed.

My generosity surprised him so much that he wanted to kiss my hand. We proceeded towards the church, and I offered my arm to the niece, who, not knowing whether she ought to accept it or not, said to me, "Do you suppose that I cannot walk alone?"

"I have no such idea, but, if I do not give you my arm, people will think me wanting in politeness."

"Well, I will take it. But, now that I have your arm, what will people think?"

"Perhaps that we love each other and that we make a very nice couple."

"And, if anyone should inform your mistress that we are in love with each other, or even that you have given your arm to a young girl?"

"I have no mistress, and I shall have none in future, because I could not find a girl as pretty as you in all Venice."

"I am very sorry for you, for we shall not return to Venice; and, even if we could, how could we remain there six months? You said six months were necessary to know a girl well."

"I would willingly defray all your expenses."

"Indeed? Then say so to my uncle, and he will think it over, for I could not go alone."

"In six months you would know me likewise."

"Oh! I know you very well already."

"Could you accept a man like me?"

"Why not?"

"And will you love me?"

"Yes, very much, when you are my husband."

I looked at the young girl with astonishment; she seemed to me a princess in the disguise of a peasant girl. Her dress, made of *gros de Tours* and all embroidered in gold, was very handsome and cost certainly twice as much as the finest dress of a Venetian lady. Her bracelets, matching the neck chain, completed her rich toilette. She had the figure of a nymph, and, the new fashion of wearing a mantle not having yet reached her village, I could see the most magnificent



Her firm and easy walk, the natural freedom of all her movements, a charming look which seemed to say, "I am very glad that you think me pretty," everything, in short, caused the ardent fire of amorous desires to circulate through my veins.

bosom, although her dress was fastened up to the neck. The end of the richly embroidered skirt did not go lower than the ankles, which allowed me to admire the neatest little foot and the lower part of an exquisitely moulded leg. Her firm and easy walk, the natural freedom of all her movements, a charming look which seemed to say, "I am very glad that you think me pretty"—everything, in short, caused the ardent fire of amorous desires to circulate through my veins. I could not conceive how such a lovely girl could have spent a fortnight in Venice without finding a man to marry or to deceive her. I was particularly delighted with her simple, artless way of talking, which in the city might have been taken for silliness.

Absorbed in my thoughts and having resolved in my own mind on rendering brilliant homage to her charms, I waited impatiently for the end of the mass.

After breakfast I had great difficulty in convincing the curate that my seat in the carriage was the last one, but I found it easier to persuade him on our arrival in Treviso to remain for dinner and for supper at a small, unfrequented inn, as I took all the expense upon myself. He accepted very willingly when I added that immediately after supper a carriage would be in readiness to convey him to P—, where he would arrive in an hour, after a pleasant journey by moonlight. He had nothing to hurry him on except his wish to say mass in his own church the next morning.

I ordered a fire and a good dinner, and the idea struck me that the curate himself might pledge the ring for me, and thus give me the opportunity of a short interview with his niece. I proposed it to him, saying that I could not very well go myself, as I did not wish to be known; he undertook the commission at once, expressing his pleasure at doing something to oblige me.

He left us, and I remained alone with Christine. I spent an hour with her without trying to give her even a kiss, although I was dying to do so, but I prepared her heart to burn with the same desires which were already burning in me by those words which so easily inflame the imagination of a young girl.

The curate came back and returned me the ring, saying that it could not be pledged until the day after the morrow, in consequence of the Festival of the Holy Virgin. He had spoken to the cashier, who had stated that, if I liked, the bank would lend double the sum I had asked.

"My dear sir," I said, "you would greatly oblige me if you would come back here from P— to pledge the ring yourself. Now that it has been offered once by you, it might look very strange if it were brought by another person. Of course I will pay all your expenses."

"I promise you to come back."

I hoped he would bring his niece with him.

I was seated opposite Christine during the dinner and discovered fresh charms in her every minute, but, fearing I might lose her confidence if I tried to obtain some slight favour, I made up my mind not

to go to work too quickly but to contrive that the curate should bring her again to Venice. I thought that only there could I bring love into play and give it the food it requires.

"Reverend sir," I said, "let me advise you to bring your niece again to Venice. I undertake to defray all expenses and to find an honest woman with whom your Christine will be as safe as with her own mother. I want to know her well in order to make her my wife, and, if she comes to Venice, our marriage is certain."

"Sir, I will bring my niece myself to Venice as soon as you inform me that you have found a worthy woman with whom I can leave her in safety."

While we were talking I kept looking at Christine, and I could see her smile with contentment.

"My dear Christine," I said, "within a week I shall have arranged the affair. In the meantime I will write to you; I hope that you have no objection to corresponding with me?"

"My uncle will write for me, for I have never been taught writing."

"What, my dear child! you wish to become the wife of a Venetian, and you cannot write?"

"Is it then necessary to know how to write in order to become a wife? I can read well."

"That is not enough, and, although a girl can be a wife and a mother without knowing how to trace one letter, it is generally admitted that a young girl ought to be able to write. I wonder you never learned."

"There is no wonder in that, for not one girl in our village can do it. Ask my uncle."

"It is perfectly true, but there is not one who thinks of getting married in Venice, and, as you wish for a Venetian husband, you must learn."

"Certainly," I said, "and before you come to Venice, for everybody would laugh at you, if you could not write. I see that it makes you sad, my dear, but it cannot be helped."

"I am sad, because I cannot learn writing in a week."

"I undertake," said the uncle, "to teach you in a fortnight if you will only practise diligently. You will then know enough to be able to improve by your own exertions."

"It is a great undertaking, but I accept it; I promise you to work night and day, and I shall begin to-morrow."

After dinner I advised the priest not to leave that evening but to rest during the night, and I observed that, by going away before breakfast, he would reach P— in good time and feel all the better for it. I made the same proposal to him in the evening, and, when he saw that his niece was sleepy, he was easily persuaded to remain. I called for the innkeeper, ordered a carriage for the clergyman and desired that a fire be lit for me in the next room, where I would sleep, but the good priest said that it was unnecessary, because there were two large

beds in our room—one would be for me and the other for him and his niece.

"We need not undress," he added, "as we mean to leave very early, but you can take off your clothes, sir, because you are not going with us, and you will like to remain in bed to-morrow morning."

"Oh!" remarked Christine, "I must undress, otherwise I could not sleep, but I need only a few minutes to get ready in the morning."

I said nothing, but I was amazed. Christine then, lovely and charming enough to wreck the chastity of a Xenocrates, would sleep naked with her uncle! True, he was old, devout and without any of the ideas which might render such a position dangerous, yet the priest was a man, he had evidently felt like all men, and he ought to know the danger he was exposing himself to. My carnal-mindedness could not realise such a state of innocence. But he was truly innocent, so much so that he acted openly and did not suppose that anyone could see anything wrong in it. I saw it all plainly, but I was not accustomed to such things and felt lost in wonderment. As I advanced in age and in experience, I have seen the same custom established in many countries amongst honest people whose good morals were in no way debased by it, but it was amongst good people, and I do not pretend to belong to that worthy class.

We had had no meat for dinner, and my delicate palate was not over-satisfied. I went down to the kitchen myself and told the landlady that I wanted the best that could be procured in Treviso for supper, particularly in wines.

"If you do not mind the expense, sir, trust to me, and I undertake to please you. I will give you some Gatta wine."

"All right; but let us have supper early."

When I returned to our room, I found Christine caressing the cheeks of her old uncle, who was laughing; the good man was seventy-five years old.

"Do you know what is the matter?" he said to me. "My niece is caressing me because she wants me to leave her here until my return. She tells me that you were like brother and sister during the hour you have spent alone together this morning, and I believe it, but she does not consider that she would be a great trouble to you."

"Not at all, quite the reverse; she will afford me great pleasure, for I think her very charming. As to our mutual behaviour, I believe you can trust us both to do our duty."

"I have no doubt of it. Well, I will leave her under your care until the day after to-morrow. I will come back early in the morning so as to attend to your business."

This extraordinary and unexpected arrangement caused the blood to rush to my head with such violence that my nose bled profusely for a quarter of an hour. It did not frighten me, because I was used to such accidents, but the good priest was in a great fright, thinking that it was a serious hæmorrhage.

When I had allayed his anxiety, he left us on some business of his

own, saying that he would return at nightfall. I remained alone with the charming, artless Christine and lost no time in thanking her for the confidence she placed in me.

"I can assure you," she said, "that I wish you to have a thorough knowledge of me; you will see that I have none of the faults which have displeased you so much in the young ladies you have known in Venice, and I promise to learn writing immediately."

"You are charming and true; but you must be discreet in P—, and confide to no one that we have entered into an agreement with each other. You must act according to your uncle's instructions, for it is to him that I intend to write to make all arrangements."

"You may rely upon my discretion; I will not say anything, even to my mother, until you give me permission to do so."

I passed the afternoon thus, denying myself even the slightest liberties with my lovely companion, but falling every minute deeper in love with her. I told her a few love stories which I veiled sufficiently not to shock her modesty; she felt interested, and I could see that, although she did not always understand, she pretended to do so, in order not to appear ignorant.

When her uncle returned, I had arranged everything in my mind to make her my wife, and I resolved on placing her during her stay in Venice in the house of the same honest widow with whom I had found a lodging for my beautiful Countess A— S—.

We had a delicious supper. I had to teach Christine how to eat oysters and truffles, which she then saw for the first time. Gatta wine is like champagne, it causes merriment without intoxicating, but it cannot be kept for more than one year. We went to bed before midnight, and it was broad daylight when I awoke. The curate had left the room so quietly that I had not heard him.

I looked towards the other bed; Christine was asleep. I wished her "good morning," she opened her eyes and, leaning on her elbow, smiled sweetly.

"My uncle has gone; I did not hear him."

"Dearest Christine, you are as lovely as one of God's angels; I have a great longing to give you a kiss."

"If you long for a kiss, my dear friend, come and give me one."

I jump out of my bed; decency makes her hide her face; it is cold, and I am in love; I find myself in her arms by one of those spontaneous movements which sentiment alone can cause, and we belong to each other without having thought of it, she happy and rather confused, I delighted yet unable to realise the truth of a victory won without any contest.

An hour passed in the midst of happiness during which we forgot the whole world; calm followed the stormy gusts of passionate love, and we gazed at each other without speaking.

Christine was the first to break the silence.

"What have we done?" she said, softly and lovingly.

"We have become husband and wife."

"What will my uncle say to-morrow?"

"He need not know anything about it until he gives us the nuptial benediction in his own church."

"And when will he do so?"

"As soon as we have completed all the arrangements necessary for a public marriage."

"How long will that be?"

"About a month."

"We cannot be married during Lent."

"I will obtain permission."

"You are not deceiving me?"

"No, for I adore you."

"Then you no longer want to know me better?"

"No, I know you thoroughly now and feel certain that you will make me happy."

"And will you make me happy, too?"

"I hope so."

"Let us get up and go to church. Who could have believed that, to get a husband, it was necessary not to go to Venice, but to start home from that city!"

We got up and, after partaking of some breakfast, went to hear mass. The morning passed off quickly, but towards dinner-time I thought that Christine looked different to what she had the day before, and I asked her the reason of that change.

"It must be," she said, "the same reason which causes you to be thoughtful."

"An air of thoughtfulness, my dear, is proper to love when it finds itself in consultation with honour. This affair has become serious, and love is now compelled to think and consider. We want to be married in the church, and we cannot do it before Lent, now that we are in the last days of carnival; yet we cannot wait until Easter, it would be too long. We must therefore obtain a dispensation in order to be married. Have I not reason to be thoughtful?"

Her only answer was to come and kiss me tenderly. I had spoken the truth, yet I had not told her all my reasons for being so pensive. I found myself drawn into an engagement which was not disagreeable to me, but I wished it had not been so very pressing. I could not conceal from myself that repentance was beginning to creep into my amorous and well disposed mind, and I was grieved at it. I felt certain, however, that the charming girl would never have any cause to reproach me for her misery.

We had the whole evening before us, and, as she told me that she had never gone to a theatre, I resolved on affording her that pleasure. I sent for a Jew, from whom I procured everything necessary to disguise her, and we went to the theatre. A man in love enjoys no pleasure but that which he gives to the woman he loves. After the performance was over, I took her to the Casino, and her astonishment made me laugh when she saw for the first time a faro bank. I had not

money enough to play myself, but I had more than enough to amuse her and to let her play a reasonable game. I gave her ten sequins and explained what she had to do. She did not even know the cards, yet in less than an hour she had won one hundred sequins. I made her leave off playing, and we returned to the inn. When we were in our room, I told her to see how much money she had, and, when I assured her that all that gold belonged to her, she thought it was a dream.

"Oh! what will my uncle say?" she exclaimed.

We had a light supper and spent a delightful night, taking good care to part by daybreak, so as not to be caught in the same bed by the worthy ecclesiastic. He arrived early and found us sleeping soundly in our respective beds. He woke me, and I gave him the ring, which he went to pledge immediately. When he returned two hours later, he saw us dressed and talking quietly near the fire. As soon as he came in, Christine rushed to embrace him and showed him all the gold she had in her possession. What a pleasant surprise for the good old priest! He did not know how to express his wonder! He thanked God for what he called a miracle and concluded by saying that we were made to insure each other's happiness.

The time to part had come; I promised to pay them a visit in the first days of Lent, but on condition that on my arrival in P— I would not find anyone informed of my name or of my concerns. The curate gave me his niece's birth certificate and the account of her possessions. As soon as they had gone, I took my departure for Venice, full of love for the charming girl and determined on keeping my engagement with her. I knew how easy it would be for me to convince my three friends that my marriage had been irrevocably written in the great book of fate.

My return caused the greatest joy to the three excellent men because, not being accustomed to see me three days absent, M. Dandolo and M. Barbaro had been afraid of some accident having befallen me; but M. de Bragadin's faith was stronger, and he allayed their fears, saying to them that, with *Paralis* watching over me, I could not be in any danger.

The very next day I resolved on insuring Christine's happiness without making her my wife. I had thought of marrying her when I loved her better than myself, but, after obtaining possession, the balance was so much on my side that my self-love proved stronger than my love for Christine. I could not make up my mind to renounce the advantages, the hopes which I thought were attached to my happy independence. Yet I was the slave of sentiment. To abandon the artless, innocent girl seemed to me an awful crime of which I could not be guilty, and the mere idea of it made me shudder. I was aware that she was, perhaps, bearing in her womb a living token of our mutual love, and I shivered at the bare possibility that her confidence in me might be repaid by shame and everlasting misery.

I bethought myself of finding her a husband in every way better than myself, a husband so good that she would not only forgive me

the insult I should thus be guilty of towards her, but also thank me in the end and like me all the better for my deceit.

To find such a husband could not be very difficult, for Christine was not only blessed with wonderful beauty and with a well established reputation for virtue, but she was also the possessor of a fortune amounting to four thousand Venetian ducats.

Shut up in a room with the three worshippers of my oracle, I consulted *Paralis* upon the affair which I had so much at heart. The answer was, "Serenus must attend to it."

Serenus was the cabalistic name of M. de Bragadin, and the excellent man immediately expressed himself ready to execute all the orders of *Paralis*. It was my duty to inform him of those orders.

"You must," I said to him, "obtain from the Holy Father a dispensation for a worthy and virtuous girl, so as to give her the privilege of marrying during Lent in the church of her village; she is a young country girl. Here is her certificate of birth. The husband is not yet known; but it does not matter, *Paralis* undertakes to find one."

"Trust to me," said my father. "I will write at once to our ambassador in Rome, and I will contrive to have my letter sent by special express. You need not be anxious, leave it all to me; I will make it a business of state, and I must obey *Paralis* all the more readily that I foresee that the intended husband is one of us four. Indeed, we must prepare to obey."

I had some trouble in keeping my laughter down, for it was in my power to metamorphose Christine into a grand Venetian lady, the wife of a senator; but that was not my intention. I again consulted the oracle in order to ascertain who would be the husband of the young girl, and the answer was that M. Dandolo was entrusted with the care of finding one, young, handsome, virtuous and able to serve the Republic, either at home or abroad. M. Dandolo was to consult me before concluding any arrangements. I gave him courage for his task by informing him that the girl had a dowry of four thousand ducats, but I added that his choice was to be made within a fortnight. M. de Bragadin, delighted at not being entrusted with the commission, laughed heartily.

These arrangements made me feel at peace with myself. I was certain that the husband I wanted would be found, and I thought only of finishing the carnival gaily and of contriving to find my purse ready for a case of emergency.

Fortune soon rendered me possessor of a thousand sequins. I paid my debts, and, the licence for the marriage having arrived from Rome ten days after M. de Bragadin had applied for it, I gave him one hundred ducats, that being the sum it had cost. The dispensation gave Christine the right of being married in any church in Christendom; she would only have to obtain the seal of the episcopal court of the diocese in which the marriage was to take place, and no publication of banns was required. We lacked, therefore, but one thing, a trifling one—namely, the husband. M. Dandolo had already proposed three

or four to me, but I had refused them for excellent reasons. At last he offered one who suited me exactly.

I had to take the diamond ring out of pledge, and, not wishing to do it myself, I wrote to the priest, making an appointment in Treviso. I was not, of course, surprised when I found he was accompanied by his lovely niece, who, thinking that I had come to complete all arrangements for our marriage, embraced me without ceremony, and I did the same. If the uncle had not been present, I am afraid those kisses would have caused all my heroism to vanish. I gave the curate the dispensation, and the handsome features of Christine shone with joy. She certainly could not imagine that I had been working so actively for others, and, as I was not yet certain of anything, I did not undeceive her then. I promised to be in P— within eight or ten days, when we would complete all necessary arrangements. After dinner I gave the curate the ticket for the ring and the money to take it out of pledge, and we retired to rest. This time, very fortunately, there was but one bed in the room, and I had to take another chamber for myself.

The next morning I went into Christine's room and found her in bed. Her uncle had gone out for my diamond ring, and, alone with that lovely girl, I found that I had, when necessary, complete control over my passions. Reflecting that she was not to be my wife and that she would belong to another, I considered it my duty to silence my desires. I kissed her, but nothing more.

I spent one hour with her, fighting like Saint Anthony against the carnal desires of my nature. I could see the charming girl full of love and of wonder at my reserve, and I admired her virtue in the natural modesty which prevented her from making the first advances. She got out of bed and dressed without showing any disappointment. She would, of course, have felt mortified if she had had the slightest idea that I looked down upon her or did not value her charms.

Her uncle returned, gave me the ring, and we had dinner, after which he treated me to a wonderful exhibition. Christine had learned how to write, and, to give me a proof of her talent, she wrote very fluently and very prettily in my presence.

We parted after my promising to come back again within ten days, and I returned to Venice.

On the second Sunday in Lent M. Dandolo told me with an air of triumph that the fortunate husband had been found and that there was no doubt of my approval of the new candidate. He was Charles —, whom I knew by sight, a very handsome young man, of irreproachable conduct and about twenty-two years of age. He was clerk to M. Ragonato and godson of Count Algarotti, a sister of whom had married M. Dandolo's brother.

"Charles —," said M. Dandolo to me, "has lost his father and his mother, and I feel satisfied that his godfather will guarantee the dowry brought by his wife. I have spoken to him and believe him disposed to marry an honest girl whose dowry would enable him to purchase M. Ragonato's office."

"It seems to promise very well, but I cannot decide until I have seen him."

"I have invited him to dine with us to-morrow."

The young man came, and I found him worthy of all M. Dandolo's praise. We became friends at once; he had some taste for poetry, I read some of my productions to him, and, having paid him a visit the following day, he showed me several pieces of his own composition which were well written. He introduced me to his aunt, in whose house he lived with his sister, and I was much pleased with their friendly welcome. Being alone with him in his room, I asked him what he thought of love.

"I do not care for love," he answered, "but I should like to get married in order to have a household of my own."

When I returned to the palace, I told M. Dandolo that he might open the affair with Count Algarotti, and the count mentioned it to Charles, who said that he could not give any answer either one way or the other until he should have seen the young girl, talked with her and inquired about her reputation. As for Count Algarotti, he was ready to be answerable for his godson, that is, to guarantee four thousand ducats to the wife, provided her dowry was worth that amount. Those were the only preliminaries; the rest belonged to my province.

Dandolo having informed Charles that the matter was entirely in my hands, he called on me and inquired when I would be kind enough to introduce him to the young person. I named the day, adding that it was necessary to devote a whole day to the visit, as she resided at a distance of twenty miles from Venice, that we would dine with her and return the same evening. He promised to be ready for me by daybreak. I immediately sent an express to the curate to inform him of the day on which I would call with a friend of mine whom I wished to introduce to his niece.

On the appointed day Charles was punctual; I took care to let him know along the road that I had made the acquaintance of the young girl and her uncle as travelling companions from Venice to Mestra about one month before and that I would have offered myself as a husband if I had been in a position to guarantee the dowry of four thousand ducats. I did not think it necessary to go any further in my confidences.

We arrived at the good priest's house two hours before midday, and soon after our arrival Christine came in with an air of great ease, expressing all her pleasure at seeing me. She only bowed to Charles, inquiring from me whether he was likewise a clerk.

Charles answered that he was clerk to Ragionato.

She pretended to understand in order not to appear ignorant.

"I want you to look at my writing," she said to me, "and afterwards we will go and see my mother."

Delighted at the praise bestowed upon her writing by Charles when he heard that she had studied only one month, she invited us to follow

her. Charles asked her why she had waited until the age of nineteen to study writing.

"Well, sir, what does it matter to you? Besides, I must tell you that I am seventeen and not nineteen years of age."

Charles entreated her to excuse him, smiling at the quickness of her answer.

She was dressed like a simple country girl, yet very neatly, and she wore her handsome gold chains round her neck and on her arms. I told her to take my arm and that of Charles, which she did, casting towards me a look of loving obedience. We went to her mother's house; the good woman was compelled to keep her bed owing to sciatica. As we entered the room, a respectable-looking man who was seated near the patient rose at the sight of Charles and embraced him affectionately. I heard that he was the family physician, and the circumstance pleased me much.

After we had paid our compliments to the good woman, the doctor inquired after Charles's aunt and sister and, alluding to the sister who was suffering from a secret disease, Charles desired to say a few words to him in private; they left the room together. Being alone with the mother and Christine, I praised Charles, his excellent conduct, his high character, his business abilities, and extolled the happiness of the woman who would be his wife. They both confirmed my praises by saying that everything I said of him could be read on his features. I had no time to lose, so I told Christine to be on her guard during dinner, as Charles might possibly be the husband whom God had intended for her.

"For me?"

"Yes, for you. Charles is one of a thousand; you would be much happier with him than you could be with me; the doctor knows him, and you could ascertain from him everything which I cannot find time to tell you now about my friend."

The reader can imagine all I suffered in making this declaration and my surprise when I saw the young girl calm and perfectly composed! Her composure dried the tears already gathering in my eyes. After a short silence she asked me whether I was certain that such a handsome young man would have her. That question gave me an insight into Christine's heart and feelings and quieted all my sorrow, for I saw that I had not known her well. I answered that, beautiful as she was, there was no doubt of her being loved by everybody.

"It will be at dinner, my dear Christine, that my friend will examine and study you; do not fail to show all the charms and qualities with which God has endowed you; but do not let him suspect our intimacy."

"It is all very strange. Is my uncle informed of this wonderful change?"

"No."

"If your friend should feel pleased with me, when would he marry me?"

"In a week or ten days. I will take care of everything, and you will see me again in the course of the week."

Charles came back with the doctor, and Christine, leaving her mother's bedside, took a chair opposite to us. She answered very sensibly all the questions addressed to her by Charles, often exciting his mirth by her artlessness, but not showing any silliness.

Oh! charming simplicity! offspring of wit and ignorance, thy charm is delightful, and thou alone hast the privilege of saying anything without ever giving offence! But how unpleasant thou art when thou art not natural! And thou art the masterpiece of art when thou art imitated with perfection!

We dined rather late, and I took care not to speak to Christine, not even to look at her, so as not to engross her attention, which she devoted entirely to Charles, and I was delighted to see with what ease and interest she kept up the conversation. After dinner and as we were taking leave, I heard the following words uttered by Charles, which went to my very heart, "You are made, lovely Christine, to minister to the happiness of a prince."

And Christine? This was her answer: "I should esteem myself fortunate, sir, if you should judge me worthy of ministering to yours."

These words excited Charles so much that he embraced me!

Christine was simple, but her artlessness did not come from her mind, only from her heart. The simplicity of mind is nothing but silliness, that of the heart is only ignorance and innocence; it is a quality which subsists even when the cause has ceased to be. This young girl, almost a child of nature, was simple in her manners but graceful in a thousand trifling ways which cannot be described; she was sincere because she did not know that to conceal some of our impressions is one of the precepts of propriety, and, as her intentions were pure, she was a stranger to that false shame and mock modesty which cause pretended innocence to blush at a word said or a movement made very often without any wicked purpose.

During our journey back to Venice, Charles spoke of nothing but of his happiness; he had decidedly fallen in love.

"I will call to-morrow morning upon Count Algarotti," he said to me, "and you may write the priest to come with all the necessary documents to make the contract of marriage, which I long to sign."

His delight and his surprise were intense when I told him that my wedding present to Christine was a dispensation from the Pope for her to be married in Lent.

"Then," he exclaimed, "we must go full speed ahead!"

In the conference which was held the next day between my young substitute, his godfather and M. Dandolo, it was decided that the parson should be invited to come with his niece. I undertook to carry the message, and, leaving Venice two hours before morning I reached P— early. The priest said he would be ready to start immediately after mass. I then called on Christine and treated her to a fatherly and sentimental sermon, every word of which was intended to point out

to her the true road to happiness in the new condition which she was on the point of adopting. I told her how she ought to behave towards her husband, towards his aunt and his sister, in order to captivate their esteem and their love. The last part of my discourse was pathetic and rather disparaging to myself, for, as I enforced upon her the necessity of being faithful to her husband, I was necessarily led to entreat her pardon for having seduced her.

"When you promised to marry me, after we had both been weak enough to give way to our love, did you intend to deceive me?"

"Certainly not."

"Then you have not deceived me. On the contrary, I owe you some gratitude for having thought that, if our union should prove unhappy, it was better to find another husband for me, and I thank God that you have succeeded so well. Tell me, now, what I can answer to your friend in case he should ask me during the first night why I am so different to what a virgin ought to be."

"It is not likely that Charles, who is full of reserve and propriety, would ask you such a thing, but, if he should, tell him positively that you never had a lover, and that you do not suppose yourself to be different to any other girl."

"Will he believe me?"

"He would deserve your contempt and entail punishment on himself if he did not. But dismiss all anxiety; that will not occur. A sensible man, my dear Christine, when he has been rightly brought up, never ventures upon such a question because he is not only certain to displease, but also sure that he will never know the truth, for, if the truth is likely to injure a woman in the opinion of her husband, she would be very foolish indeed to confess it."

"I understand your meaning perfectly, my dear friend; let us, then, embrace each other for the last time."

"No, for we are alone and I am very weak; I adore thee as much as ever."

"Do not cry, dear friend, for, truly speaking, I have no wish for it."

That simple and candid answer changed my disposition suddenly, and, instead of crying, I began to laugh. Christine dressed herself splendidly, and after breakfast we left P—. We reached Venice in four hours; I lodged them at a good inn and, going to the palace, told M. Dandolo that our people had arrived, that it would be his province to bring them and Charles together on the following day and to attend to the matter altogether, because the honour of the future husband and wife, the respect due to their parents and to propriety forbade any further interference on my part.

He understood my reasons and acted accordingly. He brought Charles to me, I presented both of them to the curate and his niece and then left them to complete their business.

I heard afterwards from M. Dandolo that they all called upon Count Algarotti and at the office of a notary, where the contract of marriage

was signed, and that, after fixing a day for the wedding, Charles had escorted his intended back to P—.

On his return Charles paid me a visit; he told me that Christine had won by her beauty and pleasing manners the affection of his aunt, his sister and his godfather and that they had taken upon themselves all the expense of the wedding.

"We intend to be married," he added, "on such a day at P—, and I trust that you will crown your work of kindness by being present at the ceremony."

I tried to excuse myself, but he insisted with such a feeling of gratitude and with so much earnestness that I was compelled to accept. I listened with real pleasure to the account he gave me of the impression produced upon all his family and upon Count Algarotti by the beauty, the artlessness, the rich toilette and especially by the simple talk of the lovely country girl.

"I am deeply in love with her," Charles said to me, "and I feel that it is to you that I shall be indebted for the happiness I am sure to enjoy with my charming wife. She will soon get rid of her country way of talking in Venice because here envy and slander will but too easily show her the absurdity of it."

His enthusiasm and happiness delighted me, and I congratulated myself upon my own work; yet I felt inwardly some jealousy and could not help envying a lot which I might have kept for myself.

M. Dandolo and M. Barbaro having also been invited by Charles, I went with them to P—. We found the dinner-table laid out in the rector's house by the servants of Count Algarotti, who was acting as Charles's father and who, having taken upon himself all expense of the wedding, had sent his major-domo to P—.

When I saw Christine, the tears filled my eyes, and I had to leave the room. She was dressed as a country girl, but looked as lovely as a nymph. Her husband, her uncle and Count Algarotti had vainly tried to make her adopt the Venetian costume, but she had very wisely refused.

"As soon as I am your wife," she said to Charles, "I will dress as you please; but here I will not appear before my young companions in any other costume than the one in which they have always seen me; I shall thus avoid being laughed at and accused of pride by the girls among whom I have been brought up."

There was in these words something so noble, so just and so generous that Charles thought his sweetheart a supernatural being. He told me he had inquired from the woman with whom Christine had spent a fortnight about the offers of marriage she had refused at that time and that he had been much surprised, for two of those offers were excellent ones.

"Christine," he added, "was evidently destined by Heaven for my happiness, and to you I am indebted for the precious possession of that treasure."

His gratitude pleased me, and I must render myself the justice of

saying that I entertained no thought of abusing it. I felt happy in the happiness I had thus given.

We repaired to the church towards eleven o'clock and were very much astonished at the difficulty we experienced in getting in. A large number of the nobility of Treviso, curious to ascertain whether it was true that the marriage ceremony of a country girl would be publicly performed during Lent when, by waiting only one month, a dispensation would have been useless, had come to P—. Everyone wondered at the permission having been obtained from the Pope, everyone imagined that there was some extraordinary reason for it and was in despair because it was impossible to guess that reason. In spite of all feelings of envy, every face beamed with pleasure and satisfaction when the young couple made their appearance, and no one could deny that they deserved that extraordinary distinction, that exception to all established rules.

A certain Countess of Tos—, from Treviso, Christine's godmother, went up to her after the ceremony and embraced her most tenderly, complaining that the happy event had not been communicated to her in Treviso. Christine in her artless way answered with as much modesty as sweetness that the countess ought to forgive her if she had failed in her duty towards her, on account of the marriage having been decided on so hastily. She presented her husband and begged Count Algarotti to atone for her error towards her godmother by inviting her to join the wedding repast, an invitation which the countess accepted with great pleasure. That behaviour, which is usually the result of a good education and a long experience of society, was in the lovely peasant girl due only to a candid and well balanced mind, which shone all the more because it was all nature and not art.

As they returned from the church, Charles and Christine knelt down before the young wife's mother, who gave them her blessing with tears of joy.

Dinner was served, and of course Christine and her happy spouse took the seats of honour. Mine was the last, and I was very glad of it; but, although everything was delicious, I ate very little and scarcely opened my lips.

Christine was constantly busy, saying pretty things to every one of her guests and looking at her husband to make sure that he was pleased with her.

Once or twice she addressed his aunt and sister in such a gracious manner that they could not help leaving their places and kissing her tenderly, congratulating Charles upon his good fortune. I was seated not very far from Count Algarotti and heard him say several times to Christine's godmother that he had never felt so delighted in his life.

When four o'clock struck, Charles whispered a few words to his lovely wife, she bowed to her godmother, and everybody rose from the table. After the usual compliments—and in this case they bore the stamp of sincerity—the bride distributed among all the girls of the village, who were in the adjoining room, packets full of sugar plums

which had been prepared beforehand, and she took leave of them, kissing them all without any pride. Count Algarotti invited all the guests to sleep at a house he had in Treviso and to partake there of the dinner usually given the day after the wedding. The uncle alone excused himself, and the mother could not come, owing to her disease, which prevented her from moving; the good woman died three months after Christine's marriage.

Christine thus left her village to follow her husband, and for the remainder of their lives they lived together in mutual happiness.

Count Algarotti, Christine's godmother and my two noble friends went away together; the bride and bridegroom had, of course, a carriage to themselves, and I kept the aunt and the sister of Charles company in another. I could not help envying the happy man somewhat, although in my inmost heart I felt pleased with his happiness.

The sister was not without merit. She was a young widow of twenty-five and still deserved the homage of men; but I gave the preference to the aunt, who had told me that her new niece was a treasure, a jewel worthy of everybody's admiration, but that she would not let her go into society until she could speak the Venetian dialect well.

"Her cheerful spirits," she added, "her artless simplicity, her natural wit are like her beauty—they must be dressed in the Venetian fashion. We are highly pleased with my nephew's choice, and he has incurred everlasting obligations towards you. I hope that hereafter you will consider our house as your own."

The invitation was polite, perhaps it was sincere, yet I did not avail myself of it, and they were glad of it. At the end of one year Christine presented her husband with a living token of their mutual love, and that circumstance increased their conjugal felicity.

We all found comfortable quarters in the count's house in Treviso, where, after partaking of some refreshments, the guests retired to rest.

The next morning I was with Count Algarotti and my two friends when Charles came in, handsome, bright and radiant. While he was answering with much wit some jokes of the count, I kept looking at him with some anxiety, but he came up to me and embraced me warmly. I confess that a kiss never made me happier.

People wonder at the devout scoundrels who call upon their saint when they think themselves in need of heavenly assistance or who thank him when they imagine that they have obtained some favour from him; but people are wrong, for it is a good and right feeling, which preaches against atheism.

At Charles's invitation, his aunt and his sister had gone to pay a morning visit to the young wife, and they returned with her. Happiness never shone on a more lovely face.

M. Algarotti, going towards her, inquired from her affectionately whether she had had a good night; her only answer was to rush to her husband's arms. It was the most artless, and at the same time the most eloquent, answer she could possibly give. Then, turning her beautiful eyes towards me, and offering me her hand, she said, "M. Casanova,

I am happy, and I love to be indebted to you for my happiness."

The tears which flowed from my eyes as I kissed her hand told her better than words how truly happy I was myself.

The dinner passed off delightfully; we then left for Mestra and Venice. We escorted the married couple to their house and returned home to amuse M. de Bragadin with the relation of our expedition. This worthy and particularly learned man said a thousand things about the marriage, some of great profundity and others of great absurdity.

I laughed inwardly; I was the only one who had the key to the mystery and could realise the secret of the comedy.

CHAPTER 20

ON Low Sunday Charles paid us a visit with his lovely wife, who seemed totally different to what Christine used to be. Her hair dressed with powder did not please me as well as the raven black of her beautiful locks, and her fashionable town attire did not, in my eyes, suit her as well as her rich country dress. But the countenances of husband and wife bore the stamp of happiness. Charles reproached me in a friendly manner because I had not once called upon them, and, in order to atone for my apparent negligence, I went to see them the next day with M. Dandolo. Charles told me that his wife was idolised by his aunt and his sister, who had become her bosom friends; that she was kind, affectionate, unassuming and of a disposition which enforced affection. I was not less pleased with this favourable state of things than with the facility with which Christine was learning the Venetian dialect.

When M. Dandolo and I called at their house, Charles was not at home; Christine was alone with his two relatives. The most friendly welcome was proffered to us, and in the course of conversation the aunt praised very highly the progress made by Christine in her writing and asked her to let me see her copy-book. I followed her to the next room, where she told me that she was very happy, that every day she discovered new virtues in her husband. He had told her, without the slightest appearance of suspicion or displeasure, that he knew we had spent two days together in Treviso and that he had laughed at the well meaning fool who had given him that piece of information in the hope of raising a cloud in the heaven of their felicity.

Charles was truly endowed with all the virtues, with all the noble qualities of an honest and distinguished man. Twenty-six years afterwards I happened to require the assistance of his purse and found him my true friend. I never was a frequent visitor at his house, and he appreciated my delicacy. He died a few months before my last departure from Venice, leaving his widow in easy circumstances and three well educated sons, all with good positions, who may, for all I know, still be living with their mother.

In June I went to the fair at Padua and made the acquaintance of a

young man of my own age who was then studying mathematics under the celebrated Professor Succi. His name was Tognolo, but, thinking it did not sound well, he changed it for that of Fabris; he became, in after years, Comte de Fabris, lieutenant-general under Joseph II, and died Governor of Transylvania. This man, who owed his high fortune to his talents, would, perhaps, have lived and died unknown if he had kept his name of Tognolo, a truly vulgar one. He was from Uderzo, a large village of the Venetian Friuli. He had a brother in the Church, a man of parts and a great gamester, who, having a deep knowledge of the world, had taken the name of Fabris, and the younger brother had assumed it likewise. Soon afterwards he bought an estate with the title of count, became a Venetian nobleman, and his origin as a country bumpkin was forgotten. If he had kept his name of Tognolo, it would have injured him, for he could not have pronounced it without reminding his hearers of what is called, by the most contemptible of prejudices, low extraction; and the privileged class, through an absurd error, does not admit the possibility of a peasant having talent or genius. No doubt a time will come when society, more enlightened and therefore more reasonable, will acknowledge that noble feelings, honour and heroism can be found in every condition of life as easily as in a class the blood of which is not always exempt from the taint of a misalliance.

The new count, while he allowed others to forget his origin, was too wise to forget it himself, and in legal documents he always signed his family name, as well as the one he had adopted. His brother had offered him two ways to win fortune in the world, leaving him perfectly free in his choice. Both required an expenditure of one thousand sequins, but the abbé had put the amount aside for that purpose. My friend had to choose between the sword of Mars and the bird of Minerva. The abbé knew that he could purchase for his brother a company in the army of His Imperial and Apostolic Majesty or obtain for him a professorship at the University of Padua, for money can do everything. But my friend, who was gifted with noble feelings and good sense, knew that in either profession talents and knowledge were essentials, and, before making a choice, he was applying himself with great success to the study of mathematics. He ultimately decided upon the military profession, thus imitating Achilles, who preferred the sword to the distaff, and he paid for it with his life, like the son of Peleus—though not so young and not through a wound inflicted by an arrow, but from the plague, which he caught in the unhappy country in which the indolence of Europe allows the Turks to perpetuate that fearful disease.

The distinguished appearance, the noble sentiments, the great knowledge and the talents of Fabris would have been turned into ridicule in a man called Tognolo, for such is the force of prejudices, particularly of those which have no other ground to rest upon than silly pride, that an ill-sounding name is degrading in this silliest of all possible worlds. My opinion is that men who have an ill-sounding name, or one which presents an indecent or ridiculous idea, are right in changing it if they intend to win honour, fame and fortune in either arts or sciences. No

one can reasonably deny them that right, provided the name they assume belongs to nobody. The alphabet is general property, and everyone has the right to use it for the creation of a word forming an appellative sound. But he must truly create it. Voltaire, in spite of his genius, would not perhaps have reached posterity under his name of Arouet, especially amongst the French, who always give way so easily to their keen sense of ridicule and equivocation. How could they have imagined that a writer *à rouet* could be a man of genius? And D'Alembert, would he have attained his high fame, his universal reputation if he had been satisfied with his name of M. Le Rond, or "Mr. All-round?" What would have become of Metastasio under his true name of Trapasso? What impression would Melanchthon have made with his name of Schwarzerd? Would he then have dared to raise the voice of a moralist philosopher, of a reformer of the Eucharist and so many other holy things? Would not M. de Beauharnais have caused some persons to laugh and others to blush if he had kept his name of Beauvit, even if the first founder of his family had been indebted for his fortune to the fine quality expressed by that name? Would the Bourbeux have made as good a figure on the throne as the Bourbons? I think that King Poniatowski ought to have abdicated the name of Augustus, which he had taken at the time of his accession to the throne, when he abdicated royalty. The Coleoni of Bergamo, however, would find it rather difficult to change their name because they would be compelled at the same time to change their coat of arms (the two generative glands) and thus to annihilate the glory of their ancestor, the hero Bartolomeo.

Towards the end of autumn my friend Fabris introduced me to a family in the midst of which the mind and the heart could find delicious food. That family resided in the country on the road to Zero. Card-playing, love-making and practical jokes were the order of the day. Some of those jokes were rather severe ones, but the order of the day was never to get angry and to laugh at everything, for one had to take every jest pleasantly or be thought a bore. Bedsteads would at night tumble down under their occupants, ghosts were personated, diuretic pills or sugar-plums were given to young ladies, as well as comfits which produced certain winds impossible to keep under control. These jokes would sometimes go too far, but such was the spirit animating all the members of that circle, they would laugh at anything. I was not less inured than the others to the war of offence and defence, but at last there was such a bitter joke played upon me that it suggested to me another, the fatal consequences of which put a stop to the mania by which we were all possessed.

We were in the habit of walking to a farm which was about half a league distant by the road, but the distance could be reduced one-half by going over a deep and miry ditch across which a narrow plank was thrown; and I always insisted upon going that way, in spite of the fright of the ladies, who always trembled on the narrow bridge, although I never failed to cross the first and offer my hand to help them over.

One fine day I crossed first so as to give them courage, but suddenly, when I reached the middle of the plank, it gave way under me, and there I was in the ditch, up to the chin in stinking mud, and, in spite of my inward rage, obliged, according to the general understanding, to join in the merry laughter of all my companions. But the merriment did not last long, for the joke was too bad and everyone declared it to be so. Some peasants were called to the rescue, and with much difficulty they dragged me out in the most awful state. An entirely new dress, embroidered with spangles, my silk stockings, my lace, everything was of course spoiled, but, not minding it, I laughed more heartily than anybody else, although I had already made an inward vow to have the most cruel revenge. In order to know the author of that bitter joke, I had only to appear calm and indifferent about it. It was evident that the plank had been purposely sawn. I was taken back to the house, a shirt, a coat, a complete costume were lent to me, for I had come that time for only twenty-four hours and had not brought anything with me. I went to the city the next morning and towards the evening returned to the gay company. Fabris, who had been as angry as myself, observed to me that the perpetrator of the joke evidently felt his guilt, because he took good care not to disclose himself. But I unveiled the mystery by promising one sequin to a peasant woman if she could find out who had sawn the plank. She contrived to discover the young man who had done the work. I called on him, and the offer of a sequin, together with my threats, compelled him to confess that he had been paid for his work by Signor Demetrio, a Greek, dealer in spices, a good and amiable man of between forty-five and fifty years, on whom I had never played any trick except in the case of a pretty, young servant girl whom he was courting and whom I had juggled from him.

Satisfied with my discovery, I was racking my brain to invent a good practical joke, but, to obtain complete revenge, it was necessary that my trick should prove worse than the one he had played upon me. Unfortunately my imagination was at bay. I could not find anything. A funeral put an end to my difficulties.

Armed with my hunting-knife, I went alone to the cemetery a little after midnight and, opening the grave of the dead man who had been buried that very day, cut off one of the arms near the shoulder, not without some trouble, and, after I had re-buried the corpse, I returned to my room with the arm of the defunct. The next day, when supper was over, I left the table and retired to my chamber as if I intended to go to bed, but, taking the arm with me, I hid myself under Demetrio's bed. A short time after the Greek comes in, undresses, puts his light out and lies down. I give him time to fall nearly asleep; then, placing myself at the foot of the bed, I pull away the clothes little by little until he is half-naked. He laughs and calls out, "Whoever you may be, go away and let me sleep quietly, for I do not believe in ghosts." He covers himself again and composes himself to sleep.

I wait five or six minutes and pull again at the bed-clothes; but, when he tries to draw up the sheet, saying that he does not care for ghosts,

I oppose some resistance. He sits up so as to catch the hand which is pulling at the clothes, and I take care that he should get hold of the dead hand. Confident that he has caught the man or woman who was playing the trick, he pulls it towards him, laughing all the time; I keep tight hold of the arm for a few instants and then let it go suddenly; the Greek falls back on his pillow without uttering a single word.

The trick was played. I leave the room without any noise and, reaching my chamber, go to bed.

I was fast asleep when towards morning I was awakened by persons going about, and, not understanding why they should be up so early, I got up. The first person I met—the mistress of the house—told me that I had played an abominable joke.

"I? What have I done?"

"M. Demetrio is dying."

"Have I killed him?"

She went away without answering me. I dressed—rather frightened, I confess, but determined upon pleading complete ignorance of everything—and proceeded to Demetrio's room; and I was confronted with horror-stricken countenances and bitter reproaches. I found all the guests around him. I protested my innocence, but everyone smiled. The archpriest and the beadle, who had just arrived, would not bury the arm, which was lying there, and they told me that I had been guilty of a great crime.

"I am astonished, reverend sir," I said to the priest, "at the hasty judgment which is thus passed upon me when there is no proof to condemn me."

"You did it," exclaimed all the guests. "You alone are capable of such an abomination; it is just like you. No one but you would have dared to do such a thing!"

"I am compelled," said the archpriest, "to draw up an official complaint."

"As you please; I have not the slightest objection," I answered. "I have nothing to fear."

And I left the room.

I continued to take it coolly, and at the dinner-table I was informed that M. Demetrio had been bled, that he had recovered the use of his eyes, but not of his tongue or of his limbs. The next day he could speak, and I heard, after I had taken leave of the family, that he was stupid and spasmodic. The poor man remained in that painful state for the rest of his life. I felt deeply grieved, but I had not intended to injure him so badly. I reflected that the trick he had played upon me might have cost me my life, and I could not help deriving consolation from that idea.

On the same day the archpriest made up his mind to have the arm buried and to send a formal denunciation against me to the episcopal chancellorship of Treviso.

Annoyed at the reproaches which I received on all sides, I returned to Venice. A fortnight afterwards I was summoned to appear before

the *magistrato alla blasfemia*. I begged M. Barbaro to inquire the cause of the aforesaid summons, for it was a formidable court. I was surprised at the proceedings being taken against me, as if there had been a certainty of my having desecrated a grave, whilst there could be nothing but suspicion. But I was mistaken, the summons was not relating to that affair. M. Barbaro informed me in the evening that a woman had brought a complaint against me for having violated her daughter. She stated in her complaint that, having decoyed her child to the Zuecca, I had abused her by violence, and she adduced as a proof that her daughter was confined to her bed, owing to the bad treatment she had received from me in my endeavours to ravish her.

It was one of those complaints which are often made, in order to give trouble and to cause expense even against innocent persons. I was innocent of violation, but it was quite true that I had given the girl a sound thrashing. I prepared my defence and begged M. Barbaro to deliver it to the magistrate's secretary.

DECLARATION

"I hereby declare that on such a day, having met the woman X—with her daughter, I accosted them and offered to give them some refreshments at a coffee-house near by; that the daughter refused to accept my caresses, and that the mother said to me, 'My daughter is yet a virgin, and she is quite right not to lose her maidenhood without making a good profit by it.'

"'If so,' I answered, 'I will give you ten sequins for her virginity.'

"'You may judge for yourself,' said the mother.

"Having assured myself of the fact, I told the mother to bring the girl in the afternoon to the Zuecca, and I would give her the ten sequins. My offer was joyfully accepted, the mother brought her daughter to me, she received the money and, leaving us together in the Garden of the Cross, went away.

"When I tried to avail myself of the right for which I had paid, the girl, most likely trained to the business by her mother, contrived to prevent me. At first the game amused me, but at last, being tired of it, I told her to have done. She answered quietly that it was not her fault if I was not able to do what I wanted.

"Without more ado, I got hold of a broomstick and gave her a good lesson in order to get something for the ten sequins which I had been foolish enough to pay in advance. But I broke none of her limbs and took care to apply my blows only on her posteriors, on which spot I have no doubt that all the marks may be seen. In the evening I made her dress again and sent her back in a boat which chanced to pass, and she was landed in safety. The mother received ten sequins, the daughter has kept her hateful maidenhood, and, if I am guilty of anything, it is only of having given a thrashing to an infamous girl, the pupil of a still more infamous mother."

My declaration had no effect; the magistrate was acquainted with the girl, and the mother laughed at having duped me so easily. I was

summoned, but did not appear before the court; and a writ was on the point of being issued against my body, when the complaint of the profanation of a grave was filed against me before the same magistrate. It would have been less serious for me if the second affair had been carried before the Council of Ten because one court might have saved me from the other.

The second crime, which, after all, was only a joke, was high felony in the eyes of the clergy, and a great deal was made of it. I was summoned to appear within twenty-four hours, and it was evident that I would be arrested immediately afterwards. M. de Bragadin, who always gave good advice, told me that the best way to avoid the threatening storm was to run away. The advice was certainly wise, and I lost no time in getting ready.

I have never left Venice with so much regret as I did then, for I had some pleasant intrigues on hand, and I was very lucky at cards. My three friends assured me that within one year at the furthest the cases against me would be forgotten, and in Venice, when public opinion has forgotten anything, it can be easily arranged.

I left Venice in the evening and the next day slept at Verona. Two days afterwards I reached Mantua. I was alone, with plenty of clothes and jewels, without letters of introduction but with a well-filled purse, enjoying excellent health and my twenty-three years.

In Mantua I ordered an excellent dinner, the very first thing one ought to do at a large hotel, and after dinner I went out for a walk. In the evening, after I had seen the coffee-houses and the places of resort, I went to the theatre and was delighted to see Marina appear on the stage as a comic dancer amid the greatest applause, which she deserved, for she danced beautifully. She was tall, handsome, very well-made and very graceful. I immediately resolved on renewing my acquaintance with her if she happened to be free, and after the opera I engaged a boy to take me to her house. She had just sat down to supper with someone, but the moment she saw me she threw her napkin down and flew to my arms. I returned her kisses, judging by her warmth that her guest was a man of no consequence. The servant, without waiting for orders, had already laid a plate for me, and Marina invited me to sit down near her. I felt vexed because the aforesaid individual had not risen to salute me, and, before I accepted Marina's invitation, I asked her who the gentleman was, begging her to introduce me.

"This gentleman," she said, "is Count Celi, of Rome; he is my lover."

"I congratulate you," I said to her, and, turning towards the so-called count, "Sir," I added, "do not be angry at our mutual affection, Marina is my daughter."

"She is a prostitute."

"True," said Marina, "and you can believe the count, for he is my procurer."

At those words the brute threw his knife at her face, but she avoided it by running away. The scoundrel followed her, but I drew my sword and said, "Stop! or you are a dead man."

I immediately asked Marina to order her servant to light me out, but she hastily put a cloak on and, taking my arm, entreated me to take her with me.

"With pleasure," I said.

The count then invited me to meet him alone on the following day at the Casino of Pomi, to hear what he had to say.

"Very well, sir, at four in the afternoon," I answered.

I took Marina to my inn, where I lodged her in the room adjoining mine, and we sat down to supper.

Marina, seeing that I was thoughtful, said, "Are you sorry to have saved me from the rage of that brute?"

"No, I am very glad to have done so; but tell me truly who and what he is."

"He is a gambler by profession and gives himself out as Count Celi. I made his acquaintance here. He courted me, invited me to supper, played after supper and, having won a large sum from an Englishman whom he had decoyed to his supper by telling him that I would be present, gave me fifty guineas, saying he had given me an interest in his bank. As soon as I had become his mistress, he insisted upon my being compliant with all the men he wanted to make his dupes, and at last he took up his quarters at my lodgings. The welcome I gave you very likely vexed him, and you know the rest. Here I am and here I will remain until my departure for Mantua, where I have an engagement as first dancer. My servant will bring me all I need for to-night, and I will give him orders to move all my luggage to-morrow. I will not see that scoundrel any more. I will be only yours if you are free as in Corfu, and if you love me still."

"Yes, my dear Marina, I do love you, but, if you wish to be my mistress, you must be only mine."

"Oh! of course. I have three hundred sequins, and I will give them to you to-morrow if you will take me as your mistress."

"I do not want any money; all I want is yourself. Well, it is all arranged; to-morrow evening we shall feel more comfortable."

"Perhaps you are thinking of a duel for to-morrow? But do not imagine such a thing, dearest. I know that man; he is an arrant coward."

"I must keep my engagement with him."

"I know that, but he will not keep his, and I am very glad of it."

Changing the conversation and speaking of our old acquaintances, she informed me that she had quarrelled with her brother Petronio, that her sister was prima donna in Genoa and that Bellino-Thérèse was still in Naples, where she continued to ruin dukes. She concluded by saying, "I am the only unlucky one of the family."

"How so? You are beautiful, and you have become an excellent dancer. Do not be so prodigal of your favours, and you cannot fail to meet with a man who will take care of your fortune."

"To be sparing of my favours is very difficult; when I love, I am

no longer mine; but, when I do not love, I cannot be amiable. Well, dearest, I could be very happy with you."

"Dear Marina, I am not wealthy, and my honour would not allow me—"

"Hold your tongue; I understand you."

"Why have you not a lady's maid with you instead of a male servant?"

"You are right. A maid would look more respectable, but my servant is so clever and so faithful!"

"I can guess all his qualities, but he is not a fit servant for you."

The next day after dinner I left Marina getting ready for the theatre and, having put everything of value I possessed in my pocket, I took a carriage and proceeded to the Casino of Pomi. I felt confident of disabling the false count and sent the carriage away. I was conscious of being guilty of great folly in exposing my life with such an adversary; I might have broken my engagement with him without implicating my honour, but the fact is that I felt disposed for a fight, and, as I was certainly in the right, I thought the prospect of a duel very delightful. A visit to a dancer, a brute professing to be a nobleman, who insults her in my presence, who wants to kill her, who allows her to be carried off in his very teeth and whose only opposition is to give me an appointment! It seemed to me that, if I had failed to come, I should have given him the right to call me a coward.

The count had not yet arrived; I entered the coffee-room to wait for him. I met a good-looking Frenchman there and addressed him. Being pleased with his conversation, I told him that I was awaiting a man and that, as my honour required that he should find me alone, I would feel grateful if he would go away as soon as I saw the man approaching. A short time afterwards I saw my adversary coming along, but with a second. I then told the Frenchman that he would oblige me by remaining, and he accepted as readily as if I had invited him to a party of pleasure. The count came in with his follower, who was sporting a sword at least forty inches long and had all the look of a cut-throat. I advanced towards the count and said to him dryly, "My friend will not be in the way, as I only want to speak to you."

"If I had known that, I would not have gone out of my way. But do not let us be noisy, and let us go to some place where we can exchange a few words without being seen. Follow me."

I left the coffee-room with the young Frenchman, who, being well acquainted with the place, took me to the most favourable spot, and we waited there for the two other champions, who were walking slowly and talking together. When they were within ten paces, I drew my sword and called upon my adversary to get ready. My Frenchman had already taken out his sword, but he kept it under his arm.

"Two to one!" exclaimed Celi.

"Send your friend away and this gentleman will go likewise; at all events, your friend wears a sword, therefore we are two against two."

"Yes," said the Frenchman, "let us have a four-handed game."

"I do not cross swords with a dancer," said the cut-throat.

He had scarcely uttered those words when my friend, going up to him, told him that a dancer was certainly as good as a blackleg, and gave him a violent blow with the flat of his sword on the face. I followed his example with Celi, who began to beat a retreat and said that he only wanted to tell me something and that he would fight afterwards.

"Well, speak."

"You know me and I do not know you; tell me who you are."

My only answer was to resume laying my sword upon the scoundrel, while the Frenchman was showing the same dexterity upon the back of his companion, but the two cowards took to their heels, and there was nothing for us to do but to sheathe our weapons. Thus did the duel end in a manner even more amusing than Marina herself had anticipated.

My brave Frenchman was expecting someone at the casino; I left him after inviting him to supper for that evening after the opera. I gave him the name which I had assumed for my journey and the address of my hotel.

I gave Marina a full description of the adventure.

"I will," she said, "amuse everybody at the theatre this evening with the story of your meeting. But what pleases me most is that, if your second is really a dancer, he can be no other than M. Baletti, who is engaged with me for the Mantua Theatre."

I stored all my valuables in my trunk again and went to the opera, where I saw Baletti, who recognized me and pointed me out to all his friends, to whom he was relating the adventure. He joined me after the performance and accompanied me to the inn. Marina, who had already returned, came to my room as soon as she heard my voice, and I was amused at the surprise of the amiable Frenchman when he saw the young artist with whom he had engaged to dance the comic parts; Marina, although an excellent dancer, did not like the serious style. Those two handsome adepts of Terpsichore had never met before, and they began an amorous warfare which made me enjoy my supper immensely because, as he was a fellow artist, Marina assumed towards Baletti a tone well adapted to the circumstances and very different to her usual manner with other men. She shone with wit and beauty that evening and was in an excellent temper, for she had been much applauded by the public, the true version of the Celi business being already well known.

The theatre was to be open for only ten more nights, and, as Marina wished to leave Milan immediately after the last performance, we decided on travelling together. In the meantime I invited Baletti (it was an Italian name which he had adopted for the stage) to be our guest during the remainder of our stay in Milan. The friendship between us had a great influence upon all the subsequent events of my life, as the reader will see in these *Memoirs*. He had great talent as a dancer, but that was the least of his excellent qualities. He was honest, his feelings were noble, he had studied much and had received the best education that could be given in those days in France to a nobleman.

On the third day I saw plainly that Marina wished to make a conquest of her colleague, and, feeling what great advantage might accrue to her from it, I resolved on helping her. She had a post-chaise for two persons, and I easily persuaded her to take Baletti with her, saying that I wished to arrive alone in Mantua for several reasons which I could not confide to her; the fact was that, if I had arrived with her, people would have naturally supposed that I was her lover, and I wished to avoid that. Baletti was delighted with the proposal; he insisted upon paying his share of the expenses, but Marina would not hear of it. The reasons alleged by the young man for paying his own expenses were excellent ones, and it was with great difficulty that I prevailed upon him to accept Marina's offer, but I ultimately succeeded. I promised to wait for them on the road, so as to take dinner and supper together, and on the day appointed for our departure I left Milan one hour before them.

Reaching very early the city of Cremona, where we intended to sleep, I took a walk about the streets and, finding a coffee-house, went in. I made there the acquaintance of a French officer, and we left the coffee-room together to take a short ramble. A very pretty woman happened to pass in a carriage, and my companion stopped her to say a few words. Their conversation was soon over, and the officer joined me again.

"Who is that lovely lady?" I inquired.

"She is a truly charming woman, and I can tell you an anecdote about her worthy of being transmitted to posterity. You need not suppose that I am going to exaggerate, for the adventure is known to everybody in Cremona. The charming woman who you have just seen is gifted with wit greater even than her beauty, and here is a specimen of it. A young officer, one amongst many military men who were courting her when Marshal de Richelieu was commanding in Genoa, boasted of being treated by her with more favour than all the others, and one day, in the very coffee-room where we met, he advised a brother officer not to waste his time in courting her because he had no chance whatever of obtaining any favour.

"My dear fellow," said the other officer, "I have a much better right to give you that piece of advice, for I have already obtained from her everything which can be granted to a lover."

"I am certain that you are telling a lie," exclaimed the young man, "and I request you to follow me."

"Most willingly," said the indiscreet swain, "but what is the good of ascertaining the truth through a duel and of cutting one another's throats when I can make the lady herself certify the fact in your presence?"

"I bet twenty-five louis it is all untrue," said the incredulous officer.

"I accept your bet. Let us go."

"The two contending parties proceeded together towards the dwelling of the lady whom you saw just now, who was to name the winner of the twenty-five louis.

"They found her in her dressing-room. 'Well, gentlemen,' she said, 'what lucky wind has brought you here together at this hour?'"

"'It is a bet, madame,' answered the unbelieving officer, 'and you alone can be the umpire in our quarrel. This gentleman has been boasting of having obtained from you everything that a woman can grant to the most favoured lover; I have given him the lie in the most impressive manner, and a duel was to ensue when he offered to have the truth of his boast certified by you. *I* have bet twenty-five louis that you would not admit it, and *he* has taken my bet. Now, madame, you can say which of two is right.'

"'You have lost, sir,' she said to him. 'But now I beg both of you to quit my house, and I give you fair warning that, if you ever dare to show your faces here again, you will be sorry for it.'

"The two heedless fellows went away dreadfully mortified. The unbeliever paid the bet, but he was deeply vexed, called the other a coxcomb and a week afterwards killed him in a duel.

"Since that time the lady goes to the casino and continues to mix in society, but does not see company at her own house and lives in perfect accord with her husband."

"How did the husband take it all?"

"Quite well and like an intelligent, sensible man. He said that, if his wife had acted differently, he would have applied for a divorce because in that case no one would have entertained a doubt of her being guilty."

"That husband is indeed a sensible fellow. It is certain that, if his wife had given the lie to the indiscreet officer, he would have paid the bet, but he would have stood by what he had said, and everybody would have believed him. By declaring him the winner of the bet, she has cut the matter short and has avoided a judgment by which she would have been dishonoured. The inconsiderate boaster was guilty of a double mistake, for which he paid the penalty of his life, but his adversary was as much wanting in delicacy, for in such matters rightly-minded men do not venture upon betting. If the one who says 'yes' is impudent, the one who says 'no' is a dupe. I like the lady's presence of mind."

"But what sentence would you pass on her? Guilty or not guilty?"

"Not guilty."

"I am of the same opinion, and it has been the verdict of the public likewise, for she has since been treated even better than before the affair. You will see if you go to the casino, and I shall be happy to introduce you to her."

I invited the officer to sup with us, and we spent a very pleasant evening. After he had gone, I noticed with pleasure that Marina was capable of observing the rules of propriety; she had taken a bedroom to herself, so as not to hurt the feelings of her respectable fellow dancer.

When I arrived in Mantua, I put up at St. Mark's Hotel; Marina, to whom I had given notice that my intention was to call on her

but seldom, took up her abode in the house assigned to her by the theatrical manager.

In the afternoon of the same day, as I was walking about, I went into a bookseller's shop, to ascertain whether there was any new work out. I remained there without perceiving that the night had come, and, on being told that the shop was going to be closed, I went out. I had gone only a few yards when I was arrested by a patrol, the officer of which told me that, as I had no lantern and as eight o'clock had struck, his duty was to take me to the guardhouse. It was in vain that I observed that, having arrived only in the afternoon, I could not know that order of the police; I was compelled to follow him.

When we reached the guardhouse, the officer of the patrol introduced me to his captain, a tall, fine-looking young man, who received me in the most cheerful manner. I begged him to let me return to my hotel as I needed rest after my journey. He laughed and answered, "No, indeed, I want you to spend a joyous night with me, and in good company." He told the officer to give me back my sword, and, addressing me again, he said, "I consider you, my dear sir, only as my friend and guest."

I could not help being amused at such a novel mode of invitation, and I accepted it. He gave some orders to a German soldier, and soon afterwards the table was laid out for four persons. Two other officers joined us, and we had a very gay supper. When the dessert had been served the company was increased by the arrival of two disgusting, dissolute females. A green cloth was spread over the table, and one of the officers began a faro bank. I punted, so as not to appear unwilling to join the game and, after losing a few sequins, went out to breathe the fresh air, for we had drunk freely. One of the two females followed me, teased me and finally contrived, in spite of myself, to make me a present which condemned me to a regimen of six weeks. After that fine exploit I went in again.

A young and pleasant officer, who had lost some fifteen or twenty sequins was swearing like a trooper because the banker had pocketed his money and was going. The young officer had a great deal of gold before him on the table and contended that the banker ought to have warned him it would be the last game.

"Sir," I said to him, politely, "you are in the wrong, for faro is the freest of games. Why do you not take the bank yourself?"

"It would be too much trouble, and these gentlemen do not punt high enough for me; but, if that sort of thing amuses you, take the bank and I will punt."

"Captain," I said, "will you take a fourth share in my bank?"

"Willingly."

"Gentlemen, I beg to give notice that I will lay the cards down after six games."

I asked for new packs of cards and put three hundred sequins on the table. The captain wrote on the back of a card, "Good for a

hundred sequins. O'Neilan"; placing it with my gold, I began my bank.

The young officer was delighted and said to me, "Your bank might be defunct before the end of the sixth game."

I did not answer, and the play went on.

At the beginning of the fifth game my bank was in the pangs of death; the young officer was in high glee. I rather astonished him by telling him that I was glad to lose, for I thought him a much more agreeable companion when he was winning.

There are some civilities which very likely prove unlucky for those to whom they are addressed, and it turned out so in this case, for my compliment turned his brain. During the fifth game a run of adverse cards made him lose all he had won, and, as he tried to do violence to Dame Fortune in the sixth round, he lost every sequin he had.

"Sir," said he to me, "you have been very lucky, but I hope you will give me my revenge to-morrow."

"It would be with the greatest pleasure, sir, but I never play except when I am under arrest."

I counted my money and found I had won two hundred and fifty sequins, besides a debt of fifty sequins due by an officer who had played on trust, which Captain O'Neilan took on his own account. I completed his share, and at daybreak he allowed me to go away.

As soon as I got to my hotel, I went to bed, and, when I awoke, I had a visit from Captain Laurent, the officer who had played on trust. Thinking that his object was to pay me what he had lost, I told him that O'Neilan had taken his debt on himself, but he answered that he had called only for the purpose of begging of me a loan of six sequins on his note of hand, by which he would pledge his honour to repay me within one week. I gave him the money, and he begged that the matter might remain between us.

"I promise it," I said to him, "but do not break your word."

The next day I was ill, and the reader is aware of the nature of my illness. I immediately placed myself under a proper course of diet, however unpleasant it was at my age; but I kept to my system, and it cured me rapidly.

Three or four days afterwards Captain O'Neilan called on me, and, when I told him the nature of my sickness, he laughed, much to my surprise.

"Then you were all right before that night?" he inquired.

"Yes, my health was excellent."

"I am sorry that you should have lost your health in such an ugly place. I would have warned you if I had thought you had any intentions in that quarter."

"Did you know of the woman having . . .?"

"Zounds! Did I not? It is only a week since I paid a visit to the very same place myself, and I believe the creature was all right before my visit."

"Then I have to thank you for the present she has bestowed upon me."

"Most likely; but it is only a trifle, and you can easily get cured if you care to take the trouble."

"What! Do you not try to cure yourself?"

"Faith, no. It would be too much trouble to follow a regular diet, and what is the use of curing such a trifling inconvenience when I am certain of getting it again in a fortnight? Ten times in my life I have had that patience, but I got tired of it, and for the last two years I have resigned myself, and now I put up with it."

"I pity you, for a man like you would have great success in love."

"I do not care a fig for love; it requires cares which would bother me much more than the slight inconvenience to which we were alluding and to which I am used now."

"I am not of your opinion, for the amorous pleasure is insipid when love does not throw a little spice into it. Do you think, for instance, that the ugly wretch I met at the guard-room is worth what I now suffer on her account?"

"Of course not, and that is why I am sorry for you. If I had known, I could have introduced you to something better."

"The very best in that line is not worth my health, and health ought to be sacrificed only for love."

"Oh! you want women worthy of love? There are a few here; stop with us for some time, and, when you are cured, there is nothing to prevent you from making conquests."

O'Neilan was only twenty-three years old; his father, who was dead, had been a general, and the beautiful Countess Borsati was his sister. He presented me to the Countess Zanardi Nerli, still more lovely than his sister; but I was prudent enough not to burn my incense before either of them, for it seemed to me that everybody could guess the state of my health.

I have never met a young man more addicted to debauchery than O'Neilan. I often spent the night rambling about with him and was amazed at his cynical boldness and impudence. Yet he was noble, generous, brave and honourable. If in those days young officers were often guilty of so much immorality, of so many vile actions, it was not so much their fault as the fault of the privileges which they enjoyed through custom, indulgence or caste spirit. Here is an example:

One day O'Neilan, having drunk rather freely, rides through the city at full speed. A poor old woman who was crossing the street has no time to avoid him, she falls, and her head is cut open by the horse's feet. O'Neilan places himself under arrest, but the next day he is set at liberty; he had only to plead that it was an accident.

The officer Laurent not having called upon me to redeem his promissory note of six sequins during the week, I told him in the street that I would no longer consider myself bound to keep the affair secret. Instead of excusing himself, he said, "I do not care!"

The answer was insulting, and I intended to compel him to give

me reparation, but the next day O'Neilan told me that Captain Laurent had gone mad and had been locked up in a madhouse. He subsequently recovered his reason, but his conduct was so infamous that he was cashiered.

O'Neilan, who was as brave as Bayard, was killed a few years afterwards at the battle of Prague. A man of his complexion was certain to fall the victim of Mars or Venus. He might be alive now if he had been endowed only with the courage of the fox, but he had the courage of the lion. It is a virtue in a soldier but almost a fault in an officer. Those who brave danger with a full knowledge of it are worthy of praise, but those who do not realise it escape only by a miracle and without any merit attaching to them. Yet we must respect those great warriors, for their unconquerable courage is the offspring of a strong soul, of a virtue which places them above ordinary mortals.

Whenever I think of Prince Charles de Ligne, I cannot restrain my tears. He was as brave as Achilles, but Achilles was invulnerable. He would be alive now if he had remembered during the fight that he was mortal. Who are they that, having known him, have not shed tears in his memory? He was handsome, kind, polished, learned, a lover of the arts, cheerful, witty in his conversation, a pleasant companion and a man of perfect equability. Fatal, terrible revolution! A cannon ball took him from his friends, from his family, from the happiness which surrounded him.

The Prince de Waldeck also paid the penalty of his intrepidity with the loss of one arm. It is said that he consoles himself for that loss with the consciousness that with the remaining one he can yet command an army.

O, you who despise life, tell me whether that contempt of life renders you worthy of it?

The opera opened immediately after Easter, and I was present at every performance. I was then entirely cured and had resumed my usual life. I was pleased to see that Baletti showed off Marina to the best advantage. I never visited her, but Baletti was in the habit of breakfasting with me almost every morning.

He had once mentioned an old actress who had left the stage for more than twenty years and claimed to have been my father's friend. One day I took a fancy to call upon her, and he accompanied me to her house.

I saw an old, broken-down crone whose toilette astonished me as much as her person. In spite of her wrinkles, her face was plastered with red and white, and her eyebrows were indebted to India ink for their black appearance. She exposed one-half of her flabby, disgusting bosom, and there could be no doubt as to her false set of teeth. She wore a wig which fitted very badly and allowed the intrusion of a few grey hairs which had survived the havoc of time. Her shaking hands made mine quiver when she pressed them. She diffused a perfume of amber at a distance of twenty yards, and her affected, mincing manners amused and sickened me at the same time. Her dress might possibly

have been the fashion twenty years or so before. I looked with dread at the fearful havoc of old age upon a face which, before merciless time had blighted it, had evidently been handsome, but what amazed me was the childish effrontery with which this time-withered specimen of womankind was still waging war, with the help of her blasted charms.

Baletti, who feared lest my too visible astonishment should vex her, told her that I was amazed at the fact that the beautiful strawberry which bloomed upon her chest had not been withered by the hand of time. It was a birthmark which was really very much like a strawberry. "It is that mark," said the old woman, simpering, "which gave me the name of La Fragoletta."

I had before my eyes the fatal phantom which was the cause of my existence. I saw the woman who had, thirty years before, seduced my father; if it had not been for her, he would never have thought of leaving his father's house and would never have engendered me in the womb of a Venetian woman. I have never been of the opinion of the old author who says, *Nemo vitam vellet si daretur scientibus*.

Seeing how thoughtful I was, she politely inquired my name from Baletti, for he had presented me only as a friend and without having given her notice of my visit. When he told her that my name was Casanova, she was extremely surprised.

"Yes, madame," I said, "I am the son of Gaetan Casanova, of Parma."

"Heavens and earth! what is this? Ah! my friend, I adored your father! He was jealous without cause and abandoned me. Had he not done so, you would have been my son! Allow me to embrace you with the feelings of a loving mother."

I expected as much, and, for fear she would fall, I went to her, received her kiss and abandoned myself to her tender recollections. Still an actress, she pressed her handkerchief to her eyes, pretending to weep and assuring me that I was not to doubt the truth of what she said.

"Although," she added, "I do not look an old woman yet."

"The only fault of your dear father," she continued, "was a want of gratitude."

I have no doubt that she passed the same sentence upon the son, for, in spite of her kind invitation, I never paid her another visit.

My purse was well filled, and, as I did not care for Mantua, I resolved on going to Naples, to see again my dear Thérèse, Donna Lucrezia, Palo father and son, Don Antonio Casanova and all my former acquaintances. However, my good genius did not approve of that decision, for I was not allowed to carry it into execution. I should have left Mantua three days later, had I not gone to the opera that night.

I lived like an anchorite during my two months' stay in Mantua, owing to the folly I committed on the night after my arrival. I played only that time, and luck was with me. My slight erotic inconvenience, by compelling me to follow the diet necessary to my cure, most likely

saved me from greater misfortunes which, perhaps, I should not have been able to avoid.

CHAPTER 21

THE opera was nearly over when I was accosted by a young man who, abruptly and without any introduction, told me that, as a stranger, I had been very wrong in spending two months in Mantua without paying a visit to the natural history collection belonging to his father, Don Antonio Capitani, commissary and prebendal president.

"Sir," I answered, "I have been guilty only through ignorance, and, if you would be so good as to call for me at my hotel to-morrow morning, before the evening I shall have atoned for my error, and you will no longer have the right to address me the same reproach."

The son of the prebendal commissary called for me, and I found in his father a most eccentric, whimsical sort of man. The curiosities of his collection consisted of his family tree, books of magic, relics, coins which he believed to be antediluvian, a model of the Ark taken from nature at the time when Noah arrived in that extraordinary harbour, Mount Ararat, in Armenia; he had several medals, one of Sesostris, another of Semiramis, and an old knife of a queer shape, covered with rust. Besides all those wonderful treasures, he possessed, but under lock and key, all the paraphernalia of Freemasonry.

"Pray tell me," I said to him, "what relation there is between this collection and natural history? I see nothing here representing the three kingdoms."

"What! You do not see the antediluvian kingdom, that of Sesostris and that of Semiramis? Are not those the three kingdoms?"

When I heard that answer, I embraced him with an exclamation of delight, which was sarcastic in its intent but which he took for admiration, and he at once unfolded all the treasures of his whimsical knowledge respecting his possessions, ending with the rusty blade, which he said was the very knife with which St. Peter cut off the ear of Malek.

"What!" I exclaimed, "you are the possessor of this knife, and you are not as rich as Croesus?"

"How could I be so through possession of the knife?"

"In two ways. In the first place, you could obtain possession of all the treasures hidden under ground in the States of the Church."

"Yes, that is a natural consequence, because St. Peter has the keys."

"In the second place, you might sell the knife to the Pope if you happen to possess proof of its authenticity."

"You mean the parchment. Of course I have it; do you think I would have bought one without the other?"

"All right, then. In order to get possession of that knife, the Pope would, I have no doubt, make a cardinal of your son; but you must have the sheath, too."

"I have not got it, but it is unnecessary; at all events I can have one made."

"That would not do; you must have the very one in which St. Peter himself sheathed the knife when God said, *Mitte gladium tuum in vaginam*. That very sheath does exist, and it is now in the hands of a person who might sell it to you at a reasonable price or you might sell him your knife, for the sheath without the knife is of no use to him, just as the knife is useless to you without the sheath."

"How much would it cost me?"

"One thousand sequins."

"And how much would that person give me for the knife?"

"One thousand sequins, for one has as much value as the other."

The commissary, greatly astonished, looked at his son and said, with the voice of a judge on the bench, "Well, son, would you ever have thought that I would be offered one thousand sequins for this knife?"

He then opened a drawer and took out of it an old piece of paper, which he placed before me. It was written in Hebrew, and a facsimile of the knife was drawn on it. I pretended to be lost in admiration and advised him very strongly to purchase the sheath.

"It is not necessary for me to buy it or for your friend to purchase the knife; we can find out and dig up the treasures together."

"Not at all. The rubric says in the most forcible manner that the owner of the blade, *in vagina*, shall be one. If the Pope were in possession of it, he would be able, through a magical operation known to me, to cut off one of the ears of every Christian king who might be thinking of encroaching upon the rights of the Church."

"Wonderful, indeed! But it is very true, for it is said in the Gospel that St. Peter did cut off the ear of somebody."

"Yes, of a king."

"Oh, no! not of a king."

"Of a king, I tell you. Inquire whether Malek or Melek does not mean 'king'."

"Well! in case I should make up my mind to sell the knife, who would give me the thousand sequins?"

"I would; one half to-morrow, cash down; the balance of five hundred in a letter of exchange payable one month after date."

"Ah! that is like business. Be good enough to accept a dish of macaroni with us to-morrow, and under a solemn pledge of secrecy we will discuss this important affair."

I accepted and took my leave, firmly resolved on keeping up the joke. I came back on the following day, and the very first thing he told me was that, to his certain knowledge, there was an immense treasure hidden somewhere in the Papal States and that he would make up his mind to purchase the sheath. This satisfied me that there was no fear of his taking me at my word, so I produced a purse full of gold, saying that I was quite ready to complete our bargain for the purchase of the knife.

"The treasure," he said, "is worth millions; but let us have dinner. You are not going to be served on silver plates and dishes, but on real Raphael mosaic."

"My dear commissary, your magnificence astonishes me; mosaic is, indeed, far superior to silver plate, although an ignorant fool would only consider it ugly earthenware."

The compliment delighted him.

After dinner he spoke as follows:

"A man in very good circumstances, residing in the Papal States and owner of the country house in which he lives with all his family, is certain that there is a treasure buried in his cellar. He had written to my son, declaring himself ready to undertake all expenses necessary to possess himself of that treasure if we could procure a magician powerful enough to unearth it."

The son then took a letter out of his pocket, read me some passages and begged me to excuse him if, in consequence of his having pledged himself to keep the secret, he could not communicate all the contents of the letter; but I had, unperceived by him, read the word Cesena, the name of the village, and that was enough for me.

"Therefore all that is necessary is to give me the possibility of purchasing the sheath on credit, for I have no ready cash at present. You need not be afraid of endorsing my letters of exchange, and, if you should know the magician you might go halves with him."

"The magician is ready; it is I, but, unless you give me five hundred sequins cash down, we cannot agree."

"I have no money."

"Then sell me the knife."

"No."

"You are wrong, for, now that I have seen it, I can easily take it from you. But I am honest enough not to wish to play such a trick upon you."

"You could take my knife from me? I should like to be convinced of that, but I do not believe it."

"You do not? Very well, to-morrow the knife will be in my possession, but, when it is once in my hands, you need not hope to see it again. A spirit which is under my orders will bring it to me at midnight, and the same spirit will tell me where the treasure is buried."

"Let the spirit tell you that, and I shall be convinced."

"Give me a pen, ink and paper."

I asked a question from my oracle, and the answer I had was that the treasure was to be found not far from the Rubicon.

"That is," I said, "a torrent which was once a river."

They consulted a dictionary and found that the Rubicon flowed through Cesena; they were amazed, and, as I wished them to have full scope for wrong reasoning, I left them.

I had taken a fancy, not to purloin five hundred sequins from those poor fools, but to go and unearth the amount at their expense in the house of another fool and to laugh at them all into the bargain. I

longed to play the part of a magician. With that idea, when I left the house of the ridiculous antiquarian, I proceeded to the public library, where, with the assistance of a dictionary, I wrote the following specimen of facetious erudition:

"The treasure is buried in the earth at a depth of seventeen and a half fathoms and has been there for six centuries. Its value amounts to two millions of sequins, enclosed in a casket, the same which was taken by Godfrey de Bouillon from Mathilda, Countess of Tuscany, in the year 1081, when he endeavoured to assist Henry IV against the princess. He buried the box himself in the very spot where it is now before he went to lay siege to Jerusalem. Gregory VII, who was a great magician, having been informed of the place where it had been hidden, had resolved on getting possession of it himself, but death prevented him from carrying out his intentions. After the death of the Countess Mathilda in the year 1116, the genius presiding over all hidden treasures appointed seven spirits to guard the box. During a night with a full moon, a learned magician can raise the treasure to the surface of the earth by placing himself in the middle of the magical ring called *maximus*."

I expected to see the father and son, and they came early in the morning. After some rambling conversation I gave them what I had composed at the library, namely, the history of the treasure taken from the Countess Mathilda.

I told them that I had made up my mind to recover the treasure, and I promised them the fourth part of it, provided they would purchase the sheath; I concluded by threatening again to possess myself of their knife.

"I cannot decide," said the commissary, "before I have seen the sheath."

"I pledge my word to show it to you to-morrow," I answered.

We parted company, highly pleased with each other.

In order to manufacture a sheath such as the wonderful knife required, it was necessary to combine the most whimsical idea with the oddest shape. I recollected very well the form of the blade, and, as I was revolving in my mind the best way to produce something very extravagant but well adapted to the purpose I had in view, I spied in the yard of the hotel an old piece of leather, the remnant of what had been a fine gentleman's boot; it was exactly what I wanted.

I took that old sole, boiled it and made in it a slit into which I was certain that the knife would go easily. Then I pared it carefully on all sides to prevent the possibility of its former use being found out; I rubbed it with pumice stone, sand and ochre and finally succeeded in imparting to my production such a queer, old-fashioned shape that I could not help laughing in looking at my work.

When I presented it to the commissary and he had found it an exact fit for the knife, the good man remained astounded. We dined together, and after dinner it was decided that his son should accompany me and introduce me to the master of the house in which the

treasure was buried, that I was to receive a letter of exchange for one thousand Roman crowns, drawn by the son on Bologna, which would be made payable to my name only after I should have found the treasure, and that the knife with the sheath would be delivered into my hands only when I should require it for the great operation; until then the son was to retain possession of it.

These conditions having been agreed upon, we made an agreement in writing, binding upon all parties, and our departure was fixed for the day after the morrow.

As we left Mantua, the father pronounced a fervent blessing over his son's head and told me that he was a count palatine, showing me the diploma which he had received from the Pope. I embraced him, giving him his title of count, and pocketed the letter of exchange.

After bidding adieu to Marina, who was then the acknowledged mistress of Count Arcorati, and to Baletti, whom I was sure of meeting again in Venice before the end of the year, I went to sup with my friend O'Neilan.

We started early in the morning, travelled through Ferrara and Bologna and reached Cesena, where we put up at the posting-house. We got up early the next day and walked quietly to the house of George Franzia, a wealthy peasant, who was owner of the treasure. It was only a quarter of a mile from the city, and the good man was agreeably surprised by our arrival. He embraced Capitani, whom he knew already, and, leaving me with his family, went out with my companion to talk business.

Observant as usual, I passed the family in review and fixed my choice upon the eldest daughter. The youngest girl was ugly, and the son looked a regular fool. The mother seemed to be the real master of the household, and there were three or four servants going about the premises.

The eldest daughter was called Geneviève, or Javotte, a very common name among the girls of Cesena. I told her that I thought her eighteen, but she answered, in a tone half serious, half vexed, that I was very much mistaken, for she had only just completed her fourteenth year.

"I am very glad it is so, my pretty child."

These words brought back her smile.

The house was well situated, and there was not another dwelling around it for at least four hundred yards. I was glad to see that I should have comfortable quarters, but I was annoyed by a very unpleasant stink which tainted the air and which could certainly not be agreeable to the spirits I had to evoke.

"Madame Franzia," said I to the mistress of the house, "what is the cause of that bad smell?"

"Sir, it arises from the hemp which we are macerating."

I concluded that, if the cause were removed, I should get rid of the effect.

"What is that hemp worth, madame?" I inquired.

"About forty crowns."

"Here they are; the hemp belongs to me now, and I must beg your husband to have it removed immediately."

Capitani called me, and I joined him. Franzia showed me all the respect due to a great magician, although I had not much the appearance of one.

We agreed that he should receive one-fourth of the treasure, Capitani another fourth and the remainder should belong to me. We certainly did not show much respect for the rights of St. Peter.

I told Franzia that I should require a room with two beds for myself alone and an ante-room with bathing apparatus. Capitani's room was to be in a different part of the house, and my room was to be provided with three tables, two of them small and one large. I added that he must at once procure me a sewing-girl between the ages of fourteen and eighteen. She was to be a virgin, and it was necessary that she, as well as every person in the house, should keep the secret faithfully in order that no suspicion of our proceedings should reach the Inquisition, or all would be lost.

"I intend to take up my quarters here to-morrow," I added. "I require two meals every day, and the only wine I can drink is Jevese. For my breakfast I drink a peculiar kind of chocolate which I make myself and which I have brought with me. I promise to pay my own expenses in case we do not succeed. Please to remove the hemp sufficiently distant from the house so that its bad smell may not annoy the spirits to be evoked by me, and let the air be purified by the discharge of gunpowder. Besides, you must send a trusty servant to-morrow to convey our luggage from the hotel here, and keep constantly in the house and at my disposal one hundred new wax candles and three torches."

After I had given instructions to Franzia, I left him and went towards Cesena with Capitani, but we had not gone a hundred yards when we heard the good man running after us.

"Sir," he said to me, "be kind enough to take back the forty crowns which you paid to my wife for the hemp."

"No, I will not do anything of the sort, for I do not want you to sustain any loss."

"Take them back, I beg; I can sell the hemp in the course of the day for forty crowns without difficulty."

"In that case I will, for I have confidence in what you say."

Such proceedings on my part impressed the excellent man very favourably, and he entertained the deepest veneration for me, which was increased when, against Capitani's advice, I resolutely refused one hundred sequins which he wanted to force upon me for my travelling expenses. I threw him into raptures by telling him that, on the eve of possessing an immense treasure, it was unnecessary to think of such trifles.

The next morning our luggage was sent for, and we found ourselves comfortably located in the house of the wealthy and simple Franzia.

He gave us a good dinner, but with too many dishes, and I told him to be more economical and to give only some good fish for our supper, which he did. After supper he told me that, as far as the young maiden was concerned, he thought he could recommend his daughter Javotte, as he had consulted his wife and had found I could rely upon the girl being a virgin.

"Very good," I said. "Now tell me what grounds you have for supposing that there is a treasure in your house."

"In the first place, the oral tradition transmitted from father to son for the last eight generations; in the second, the heavy sounds which are heard underground during the night. Besides, the door of the cellar opens and shuts of itself every three or four minutes—which must certainly be the work of the devils seen every night wandering through the country in the shape of pyramidal flames."

"If it is as you say, it is evident that you have a treasure hidden somewhere in your house; it is as certain as the fact that two and two are four. Be very careful not to put a lock to the door of the cellar to prevent its opening and shutting of itself; otherwise you would have an earthquake, which would destroy everything here. Spirits must enjoy perfect freedom, and they break through every obstacle raised against them."

"God be praised for having sent here, forty years ago, a learned man who told my father exactly the same thing! That great magician required only three days more to unearth the treasure when my father heard that the Inquisition had given orders to arrest him, and he lost no time in insuring his escape. Can you tell me how it is that magicians are not more powerful than the Inquisitors?"

"Because the monks have a greater number of devils under their command than we have. But I feel certain that your father had already expended a great deal of money with that learned man."

"About two thousand crowns."

"Oh! more, more."

I told Franzia to follow me, and, in order to accomplish something in the magic line, I dipped a towel in some water and, uttering fearful words which belonged to no human language, washed the eyes, temples and chest of every person in the family, including Javotte, who might have objected to it if I had not begun with her father, mother and brother. I made them swear upon my pocketbook that they were not labouring under any impure disease, and I concluded the ceremony by compelling Javotte to swear likewise that she had her maidenhood. As I saw that she was blushing to the very roots of her hair in taking the oath, I was cruel enough to explain to her what it meant; I then asked her to swear again, but she answered that there was no need of it, now that she knew what it was. I ordered all the family to kiss me, and, finding that Javotte had eaten garlic, I forbade the use of it entirely, which order Franzia promised should be complied with.

Geneviève was not a beauty as far as her features were concerned; her complexion was too much sunburnt, and her mouth was too large,

but her teeth were splendid, and her under lip projected slightly as if it had been formed to receive kisses. Her bosom was well made and as firm as a rock, but her hair was too light, and her hands too fleshy. The defects, however, had to be overlooked, and altogether she was not an unpleasant morsel. I did not purpose to make her fall in love with me; with a peasant girl that task might have been a long one; all I wanted was to train her to perfect obedience, which, in default of love, has always appeared to me the essential point. True that in such a case one does not enjoy the ecstatic raptures of love, but one finds a compensation in the complete control obtained over the woman.

I gave notice to the father, to Capitani and to Javotte that each would, in turn and in the order of their age, take supper with me, and that Javotte would sleep every night in my ante-room, where was to be placed a bath, in which I would bathe my guest one-half hour before sitting down to supper, and the guest was not to have broken his fast throughout the day.

I prepared a list of all the articles of which I pretended to be in need and, giving it to Franzia, told him to go to Cesena himself the next day and purchase everything without bargaining to obtain a lower price. Among other things I ordered a piece, from twenty to thirty yards long, of white linen, thread, scissors, needles, storax, myrrh, sulphur, olive oil, camphor, one ream of paper, pens and ink, twelve sheets of parchment, brushes and a branch of olive tree to make a stick eighteen inches in length.

After I had given all my orders very seriously and without any wish to laugh, I went to bed highly pleased with my personification of a magician, in which I was astonished to find myself so completely successful.

The next morning, as soon as I was dressed, I sent for Capitani and commanded him to proceed every day to Cesena, go to the best coffee-house, learn carefully every piece of news and every rumour and report them to me.

Franzia, who had faithfully obeyed my orders, returned before noon from the city with all the articles I had asked for.

"I did not bargain for anything," he said to me, "and the merchants, I have no doubt, must have taken me for a fool, for I have certainly paid one-third more than the things are worth."

"So much the worse for them if they have deceived you; but you would have spoilt everything if you had beaten them down in their prices. Now send me your daughter and let me be alone with her."

As soon as Javotte was in my room, I made her cut the linen in seven pieces, four of five feet long, two of two feet, and one of two feet and a half; the last one was intended to form the hood of the robe I was to wear for the great operation. Then I said to Javotte:

"Sit down near my bed and begin sewing. You will dine here and remain at work until the evening. When your father comes, you must let us be alone, but, as soon as he leaves me, come back and go to bed."

She dined in my room, where her mother waited on her without

speaking and gave her nothing to drink except St. Jevese wine. Towards evening her father came, and she left us.

I had the patience to wash the good man while he was in the bath, after which he had supper with me; he ate voraciously, telling me that it was the first time in his life that he had remained twenty-four hours without breaking his fast. Intoxicated with the St. Jevese wine he had drunk, he went to bed and slept soundly until morning, when his wife brought me my chocolate. Javotte was kept sewing as on the day before; she left the room in the evening when Capitani came in, and I treated him in the same manner as Franzia; on the third day, it was Javotte's turn, and that had been the object I had kept in view all the time.

When the hour came, I said to her, "Go Javotte, get into the bath and call me when you are ready, for I must purify you as I have purified your father and Capitani."

She obeyed, and within a quarter of an hour she called me. I performed a great many ablutions on every part of her body, making her assume all sorts of positions, for she was perfectly docile; but, as I was afraid of betraying myself, I felt more suffering than enjoyment.

I made her get out of the bath soon after that, and, as I was drying her, I was very near forgetting magic to follow the impulse of nature, but I told Javotte to dress and come back to me as soon as she was ready.

She had been fasting all day, and her toilette did not take a long time. She ate with a ferocious appetite, and the St. Jevese wine, which she drank like water, imparted so much animation to her complexion that it was no longer possible to see how sunburnt she was. Being alone with her after supper, I said to her, "My dear Javotte, have you been displeased at all by what I have compelled you to submit to this evening?"

"Not at all; I liked it very much."

"Then I hope you will have no objection to get into the bath with me to-morrow and wash me as I have washed you."

"Most willingly, but shall I know how to do it well?"

"I will teach you; and in future I wish you to sleep every night in my room, because I must have a complete certainty that on the night of the great operation I shall find you such as you ought to be."

From that time Javotte was at her ease with me, all her restraint disappeared, she would look at me and smile with entire confidence. Nature had operated, and the mind of the young girl soon enlarges its sphere when pleasure is its teacher. She went to bed, and, as she knew that she had no longer anything to conceal from me, her modesty was not alarmed when she undressed in my presence; it was very warm, any kind of covering is unpleasant in the hot weather, so she stripped to the skin and soon fell asleep. I did the same, but I could not help feeling some regret at having engaged myself not to take advantage of the situation before the night of the great incantation. I knew that

the operation to unearth the treasure would be a complete failure, but I knew likewise that it would not fail because Javotte's virginity was gone.

At daybreak the girl rose and began sewing. As soon as she had finished the robe, I told her to make a crown of parchment with seven long points, on which I painted some fearful figures and hieroglyphs.

In the evening, one hour before supper, I got into the bath, and Javotte joined me as soon as I called her. She performed upon me with great zeal the same ceremonies that I had done for her the day before, and she was as gentle and docile as possible. I spent a delicious hour in that bath, enjoying everything but respecting the essential point.

My kisses making her happy, and seeing that I had no objection to her caresses, she loaded me with them. I was so pleased at all the amorous enjoyment her senses were evidently experiencing that I made her easy by telling her that the success of the great magic operation depended upon the amount of pleasure she enjoyed. She then made extraordinary efforts to persuade me that she was happy, and, without overstepping the limits where I had made up my mind to stop, we got out of the bath highly pleased with each other.

As we were on the point of going to bed, she said to me, "Would it injure the success of your operation if we were to sleep together?"

"No, my dear girl; provided you are a virgin on the day of the great incantation, it is all I require."

She threw herself into my arms, and we spent a delightful night.

I passed a great part of the following night with Franzia and Capitani in order to see with my own eyes the wonderful things which the worthy peasant had mentioned to me. Standing in the yard, I heard distinctly heavy blows struck under the ground at intervals of three or four minutes. It was like the noise which would be made by a heavy pestle falling in a large copper mortar. I took my pistols and placed myself near the self-moving door of the cellar, holding a dark lantern in my hand. I saw the door open slowly and in about thirty seconds close with violence. I opened and closed it myself several times, and, unable to discover any hidden physical cause for the phenomenon, I felt satisfied that there was some unknown roguery at work, but I did not care much to find it out.

We went upstairs again, and, placing myself on the balcony, I saw in the yard several shadows moving about. They were evidently caused by the heavy and damp atmosphere, and, as to the pyramidal flames which I could see hovering over the fields, it was a phenomenon well known to me. But I allowed my two companions to remain persuaded that they were the spirits keeping watch over the treasure.

That phenomenon is very common throughout southern Italy, where the country is often at night illuminated by those meteors which the people believe to be devils and ignorance has called "night spirits," or will-o'-the-wisps.

Dear reader, the next chapter will tell you how my magic under-

taking ended, and perhaps you will enjoy a good laugh at my expense, but you need not be afraid of hurting my feelings.

CHAPTER 22

My great operation had to be performed on the following day; otherwise, according to all established rules, I would have had to wait until the next full moon. I had to make the gnomes raise the treasure to the surface of the earth at the very spot on which my incantations would be performed. Of course, I knew well enough that I should not succeed, but I knew likewise that I could easily reconcile Franzia and Capitani to a failure by inventing some excellent reasons for our want of success. In the meantime I had to play my part of a magician, in which I took a real delight. I kept Javotte at work all day, sewing together in the shape of a ring some thirty sheets of paper, on which I painted the most wonderful designs. That ring, which I called *maximus*, had a diameter of three geometric paces. I had manufactured a sort of sceptre, or magic wand, with the branch of olive brought by Franzia from Cesena. Thus prepared, I told Javotte that at twelve o'clock at night, when I came out of the magic ring, she was to be ready for everything. The order did not seem repugnant to her; she longed to give me that proof of her obedience, and, on my side, considering myself as her debtor, I was in a hurry to pay my debt and give her every satisfaction.

The hour having struck, I ordered Franzia and Capitani to stand on the balcony, so as to be ready to come to me if I called for them, and also to prevent anyone in the house seeing my proceedings. I then throw off all profane garments; I clothe myself in the long white robe, the work of a virgin's innocent hands; I allow my long hair to fall loosely, I place the extraordinary crown on my head, the circle *maximus* on my shoulders, and, seizing the sceptre with one hand, the wonderful knife with the other, I go down into the yard. There I spread my circle on the ground, uttering the most barbarous words, and, after going round it three times, I jump into the middle.

Squatting down there, I remain a few minutes motionless, then I rise and fix my eyes upon a heavy, dark cloud coming from the west, whilst from the same quarter the thunder is rumbling loudly. What a sublime genius I should have appeared in the eyes of my two fools if, having a short time before taken notice of the sky in that part of the horizon, I had announced to them that my operation would be attended by that phenomenon!

The cloud spreads with fearful rapidity, and soon the sky seems covered with a funeral pall, on which the most vivid flashes of lightning keep blazing every moment.

Such a storm was a very natural occurrence, and I had no reason to be astonished at it, but somehow fear was beginning to creep into me, and I wished myself in my room. My fright soon increased at the

sight of the lightning and the sound of the claps of thunder, which succeeded each other with fearful rapidity and seemed to roar over my very head. I then realised what an extraordinary effect fear can have on the mind, for I fancied that, if I was not annihilated by the fires of heaven which were flashing all around me, it was only because they could not enter my magic ring. Thus was I admiring my own deceitful work! That foolish reason prevented me from leaving the circle, in spite of the fear which caused me to shudder. If it had not been for that belief, the result of a cowardly fright, I would not have remained one minute where I was, and my hurried flight would no doubt have opened the eyes of my two dupes, who could not have failed to see that, far from being a magician, I was only a poltroon. The violence of the wind, the claps of thunder, the piercing cold and, above all, fear made me tremble all over like an aspen leaf. My system, which I thought proof against every accident, had vanished; I acknowledged an avenging God, who had waited for this opportunity of punishing me at one blow for all my sins and of annihilating me in order to put an end to my want of faith. The complete immobility which paralysed all my limbs seemed to me a proof of the uselessness of my repentance, and that conviction only increased my consternation.

But the roaring of the thunder dies away, the rain begins to fall heavily, danger vanishes and I feel my courage reviving. Such is man!—or, at all events such was I at that moment. It was raining so fast that, if it had continued pouring with the same violence for a quarter of an hour, the country would have been inundated. As soon as the rain had ceased, the wind abated, the clouds were dispersed and the moon shone in all its splendour, like silver in the pure, blue sky. I take up my magic ring and, telling the two friends to retire to their beds without speaking to me, hurry to my room. I still felt rather shaken, and, casting my eyes on Javotte, I thought her so pretty that I felt positively frightened. I allowed her to dry me and, after that necessary operation, told her piteously to go to bed. The next morning she told me that, when she saw me come in, shaking all over in spite of the heat, she had herself shuddered with fear.

After eight hours of sound sleep I felt all right, but I had had enough of the comedy, and, to my great surprise, the sight of Geneviève did not move me in any way. The obedient Javotte had certainly not changed, but I was not the same. I was for the first time in my life reduced to a state of apathy, and, in consequence of the superstitious ideas which had crowded in my mind the previous night, I imagined that the innocence of that young girl was under the special protection of Heaven and that, if I dared to rob her of her virginity, the most rapid and terrible death would be my punishment.

At all events, thanks to my youth and my exalted ideas, I fancied that through my self-denying resolutions the father would not be so great a dupe and the daughter not so unhappy, unless the result should prove as unfortunate for her as it had been for poor Lucie, of Paséan.

The moment Javotte became in my eyes an object of holy horror,

my departure was decided. The resolution was all the more irrevocable because I fancied some old peasant might have witnessed all my tricks in the middle of the magic ring, in which case the most Holy—or, if you like, the most infernal—Inquisition, receiving information from him, might very well have caught me and enhanced my fame by some splendid *auto-da-fé* in which I had not the slightest wish to be the principal actor. It struck me as so entirely within the limits of probability that I sent at once for Franzia and Capitani and in the presence of the unpolluted virgin told them that I had obtained from the seven spirits watching over the treasure all the necessary particulars, but had been compelled to enter into an agreement with them to delay the extraction of the treasure placed under their guardianship. I told Franzia that I would hand him in writing all the information which I had compelled the spirits to give me. I produced in reality a few minutes afterwards a document similar to the one I had concocted at the public library in Mantua, adding that the treasure consisted of diamonds, rubies, emeralds and one hundred thousand pounds of gold dust. I made him take an oath on my pocketbook to wait for me and not to have faith in any magician unless he gave him an account of the treasure in every way similar to the one which, as a great favour, I was leaving in his hands. I ordered him to burn the crown and the ring, but to keep the other things carefully until my return.

“As for you, Capitani,” I said to my companion, “proceed at once to Cesena and remain at the inn until our luggage has been brought by the man whom Franzia is going to send with it.”

Seeing that poor Javotte looked miserable, I went up to her and, speaking to her very tenderly, promised to see her again before long; I told her at the same time that, the great operation having been performed successfully, her virginity was no longer necessary and that she was at liberty to marry as soon as she pleased, or whenever a good opportunity offered itself.

I at once returned to the city, where I found Capitani making his preparations to go to the fair of Lugo and then to Mantua. He told me, crying like a child, that his father would be in despair when he saw him coming back without the knife of St. Peter.

“You may have it,” I said, “with the sheath if you will let me have the one thousand Roman crowns, the amount of the letter of exchange.”

He thought it an excellent bargain and accepted it joyfully. I gave him back the letter of exchange and made him sign a paper by which he undertook to return the sheath whenever I brought the same amount; but he is still waiting for it.

I did not know what to do with the wonderful sheath, and I was not in want of money, but I should have considered myself dishonoured if I had given it to him for nothing; besides, I thought it a good joke to levy a contribution upon the ignorant credulity of a count palatine created by the grace of the Pope. In after days, however, I would willingly have refunded his money, but, as fate would

have it, we did not see each other for a long time, and, when I met him again, I was not in a position to return the amount. It is therefore only to chance that I was indebted for that sum, and certainly Capitani never dreamed of complaining, for being the possessor of *gladium cum vagina*, he truly believed himself the master of every treasure concealed in the Papal States.

Capitani took leave of me on the following day, and I intended to proceed at once to Naples, but I was again prevented; this is how it happened:

As I returned to the inn after a short walk, mine host handed me the bill of the play, announcing four performances of the *Didone* of Metastasio at the Spada. Seeing no acquaintance of mine amongst the actors or actresses, I made up my mind to go to the play in the evening and start early the next day with post-horses. A remnant of my fear of the Inquisition urged me on, and I could not help fancying that spies were at my heels.

Before entering the house, I went into the actresses' dressing-room, and the leading lady struck me as rather good-looking. Her name was Narici, and she was from Bologna. I bowed to her and, after the commonplace conversation usual in such cases, asked her whether she was free.

"I am engaged only with the manager," she answered.

"Have you any lover?"

"No."

"I offer myself for the post if you have no objection."

She smiled jeeringly and said, "Will you take four tickets for the four performances?"

I took two sequins out of my purse, taking care to let her see that it was well filled, and, when she gave me the four tickets, presented them to the maid who was dressing her and who was prettier than the mistress; and so left the room without uttering a single word. She called me back; I pretended not to hear her and took a ticket for the pit. After the first ballet, finding the whole performance very poor, I was thinking of going away when, happening to look towards the chief box, I saw to my astonishment that it was tenanted by the Venetian Manzoni and the celebrated Juliette; the reader will doubtless remember the ball she gave at my house in Venice and the smack with which she saluted my cheek on that occasion.

They had not yet noticed me, and I inquired from the person seated next to me who was that beautiful lady wearing so many diamonds. He told me that she was Madame Querini, from Venice, whom Count Spada, the owner of the theatre, who was sitting near me, had brought with him from Faenza. I was glad to hear that M. Querini had married her at last, but I did not think of renewing the acquaintance, for reasons which my reader cannot have forgotten if he recollects our quarrel when I had to dress her as an abbé. I was on the point of going away when she happened to see me and called to me. I went up to her and, not wishing to be known by anyone, whispered to her

that my name was Farusi. Manzoni informed me that I was speaking to Her Excellency Madame Querini. "I know it," I said, "through a letter which I have received from Venice, and I beg to offer my most sincere congratulations to Madame." She heard me and introduced me to Count Spada, creating me a baron on the spot. He invited me most kindly to come to his box, asked me where I came from, where I was going to, etc., and begged the pleasure of my company at supper for the same evening.

Ten years before, he had been Juliette's friend in Vienna, when Maria Theresa, having been informed of the pernicious influence of her beauty, gave her notice to quit the city. She had renewed her acquaintance with him in Venice and had contrived to make him take her to Bologna on a pleasure trip. M. Manzoni, her old follower, who gave me all this information, accompanied her in order to bear witness of her good conduct before M. Querini; I must say that Manzoni was not a well chosen chaperon.

In Venice Juliette wanted everybody to believe that Querini had married her secretly, but at a distance of fifty leagues she did not think such a formality necessary and had already been presented by the general to all the nobility of Cesena as Madame Querini Papozzes. M. Querini would have been wrong in being jealous of the count, for he was an old acquaintance who would do no harm. Besides, it is admitted amongst certain women that the reigning lover who is jealous of an old acquaintance is nothing but a fool and ought to be treated as such. Juliette, most likely afraid of my being indiscreet, had lost no time in making the first advances; but, seeing that I had likewise some reason to fear her want of discretion, she felt reassured. From the first moment I treated her politely and with every consideration due to her position.

I found numerous company at the general's and some pretty women. Not seeing Juliette, I inquired for her from M. Manzoni, who told me that she was at the faro table, losing her money. I saw her seated next to the banker, who turned pale at the sight of my face. He was no other than the so-called Count Celi. He offered me a card, which I refused politely, but I accepted Juliette's offer to be her partner. She had about fifty sequins; I handed her the same sum and took a seat near her. After the first round, she asked me if I knew the banker; Celi had heard the question; I answered negatively. A lady on my left told me that the banker was Count Alfani. Half an hour later Madame Querini went seven and lost, and she increased her stake of ten sequins; it was the last deal of the game and therefore the decisive one. I rose from my chair and fixed my eyes on the banker's hands. But, in spite of that, he cheated before me, and Madame lost.

Just at that moment the general offered her his arm to go to supper; she left the remainder of her gold on the table and after supper, having played again, lost every sequin.

I enlivened the supper by my stories and witty jests; I captivated

everybody's friendship and particularly the general's, who, having heard me say that I was going to Naples only to gratify an amorous fancy, entreated me to spend a month with him and sacrifice my whim. But it was all in vain. My heart was unoccupied; I longed to see Lucrezia and Thérèse, whose charms after five years I could scarcely recollect. I consented to remain in Cesena only the four days during which the general intended to stay.

The next morning, as I was dressing, I had a call from the cowardly Alfani-Celi; I received him with a jeering smile, saying that I had expected him.

The hair-dresser being in the room, Celi did not answer, but, as soon as we were alone, he said, "How could you possibly have been expecting my visit?"

"I will tell you my reason as soon as you have handed me one hundred sequins, and you are going to do so at once."

"Here are fifty which I brought for you; you cannot demand more from me."

"Thank you, I take them on account; but, as I am good-natured, I advise you not to show yourself this evening in Count Spada's drawing-rooms, for you would not be admitted and it would be owing to me."

"I hope you will think twice before you are guilty of such an ungenerous act."

"I have made up my mind; now leave me."

There was a knock at my door, and the self-styled Count Alfani went away without giving me the trouble of repeating my order. My new visitor proved to be the first *castrato* of the theatre, who brought an invitation to dinner from Narici. The invitation was curious, and I accepted it with a smile. The *castrato* was named Nicolas Peritti; he pretended to be the grandson of a natural child of Sixtus V; it might have been so. I shall have to mention him again in fifteen years.

When I made my appearance at Narici's house, I saw Count Alfani, who certainly did not expect me and must have taken me for his evil genius. He bowed to me with great politeness and begged that I would listen to a few words in private.

"Here are fifty sequins more," he said, "but, as an honest man, you can take them only to give them to Madame Querini. But how can you hand the amount to her without letting her know that you have forced me to refund it? You understand what consequences such a confession might have for me."

"I shall give her the money only when you have left this place; in the meantime I promise to be discreet, but be careful not to assist fortune in my presence, or I must act in a manner that will not be agreeable to you."

"Double the capital of my bank, and we can be partners."

"Your proposal is an insult."

He gave me fifty sequins, and I promised to keep his secret.

There was a numerous attendance in Narici's rooms, especially of young men, who after dinner lost all their money. I did not play, and

it was a disappointment for my pretty hostess, who had invited me only because she had judged me as simple as the others. I remained an indifferent witness of the play, and it gave me an opportunity of realising how wise Mahomet had been in forbidding all games of chance.

In the evening, after the opera, Count Celi had the faro bank, and I lost two hundred sequins; but I could accuse only ill luck. Madame Querini won. The next day, before supper, I broke the bank, and after supper, feeling tired and well pleased with what I had won, I returned to the inn.

The following morning, which was the third day and therefore the last but one of my stay in Cesena, I called at the general's; I had heard that his adjutant had thrown the cards in Alfani's face and that a meeting had been arranged between them for twelve o'clock. I went to the adjutant's room and offered to be his second, assuring him that there would be no blood spilt. He declined my offer with many thanks and at dinner-table told me I had guessed rightly, for Count Alfani had left for Rome.

"In that case," I said to the guests, "I will take the bank to-night."

After dinner, being alone with Madame Querini, I told her all about Alfani, alias Celi, and handed her the fifty sequins of which I was the depositary.

"I suppose," she said, "that by means of this fable you hope to make me accept fifty sequins, but I thank you, I am not in want of money."

"I give you my word that I compelled the thief to refund this money, together with the fifty sequins of which he had likewise cheated me."

"That may be, but I do not wish to believe you. I beg to inform you that I am not simple enough to allow myself to be duped and, what is worse, cheated in such a manner."

Philosophy forbids a man to feel repentance for a good deed, but he must certainly have a right to regret such a deed when it is malevolently misconstrued and turned against him as a reproach.

In the evening, after the performance (which was to be the last) I took the bank, according to my promise; I lost a few sequins, but was caressed by everybody, and that is much more pleasant than winning when we are not labouring under the hard necessity of making money.

Count Spada, who had got quite fond of me, wanted me to accompany him to Brisighetta, but I resisted his entreaties because I had firmly resolved on going to Naples.

The next morning I was awakened by a terrible noise in the passage, almost at the door of my room.

Getting out of my bed, I open my door to ascertain the cause of the uproar. I see a troop of *sbirri* at the door of a chamber and in that chamber, sitting up in bed, a fine-looking man who was making himself hoarse by screaming in Latin against that rabble, the plague

of Italy, and against the innkeeper, who had been rascally enough to open the door.

I inquire of the innkeeper what it all means.

"This gentleman," answers the scoundrel, "who, it appears, can speak only Latin, is in bed with a girl, and the *sbirri* of the bishop have been sent to know whether she is truly his wife—all perfectly regular. If she is his wife, he has only to convince them by showing a certificate of marriage, but, if she is not, of course he must go to prison with her. Yet it need not happen, for I undertake to arrange everything in a friendly manner for a few sequins. I have only to exchange a few words with the chief of the *sbirri*, and they will all go away. If you can speak Latin, you had better go in and make him listen to reason."

"Who broke open the door of his room?"

"Nobody; I opened it myself with the key, as is my duty."

"Yes, the duty of a highway robber but not of an honest innkeeper."

Such infamous dealing roused my indignation, and I made up my mind to interfere. I enter the room, although I still had my nightcap on, and inform the gentleman of the cause of the disturbance. He answers with a laugh that, in the first place, it was impossible to say whether the person who was in bed with him was a woman, for that person had been seen only in the costume of a military officer, and that, in the second place, he did not think that any human being had a right to compel him to say whether his bed-fellow was his wife or his mistress, even supposing that his companion was truly a woman.

"At all events," he added, "I am determined not to give one crown to arrange the affair, and to remain in bed until my door is shut. The moment I am dressed, I will treat you to an amusing *dénouement* of the comedy. I will drive away all those scoundrels at the point of my sword."

I then see in a corner a broad sword and a Hungarian costume looking like a military uniform. I ask whether he is an officer.

"I have written my name and profession," he answers, "in the hotel book."

Astonished at the absurdity of the innkeeper, I ask him whether it is so; he confesses it, but adds that the clergy have the right to prevent scandal.

"The insult you have offered to that officer, Mr. Landlord, will cost you very dear."

His only answer is to laugh in my face. Highly enraged at seeing such a scoundrel laugh at me, I take up the officer's quarrel warmly and ask him to entrust his passport to me for a few minutes.

"I have two," he says, "therefore I can let you have one." And, taking the document out of his pocketbook, he hands it to me. The passport was signed by Cardinal Albani; the officer was a captain in a Hungarian regiment belonging to the Empress and Queen. He was from Rome, on his way to Parma with dispatches from Cardinal

Albani Alexander to M. Dutillot, prime minister of the Infante of Parma.

At the same moment a man burst into the room, speaking very loudly, and asked me to tell the officer that the affair must be settled at once because he wanted to leave Cesena immediately.

"Who are you?" I asked the man.

He answered that he was the *vetturino* whom the captain had engaged. I saw that it was a regular put-up thing and begged the captain to let me attend to the business, assuring him that I would settle it to his honour and advantage.

"Do exactly as you please," he said.

Then, turning towards the *vetturino*, I ordered him to bring up the captain's luggage, saying that he would be paid at once. When he had done so, I handed him eight sequins out of my own purse and made him give me a receipt in the name of the captain, who could speak only German, Hungarian and Latin. The *vetturino* went away, and the *sbirri* followed him in the greatest consternation, except two who remained.

"Captain," I said to the Hungarian, "keep your bed until I return. I am going now to the bishop, to give him an account of these proceedings and make him understand that he owes you some reparation. Besides, General Spada is here, and . . ."

"I know him," interrupted the captain, "and, if I had been aware of his being in Cesena, I would have shot the landlord when he opened my door to these scoundrels."

I hurried over my toilette and, without waiting for my hair to be dressed, proceeded to the bishop's palace and, making a great deal of noise, almost compelled the servants to take me to his room. A lackey who was at the door informed me that his lordship was still in bed.

"Never mind, I cannot wait."

I pushed him aside and entered the room. I related the whole affair to the bishop, exaggerating the uproar, making much of the injustice of such proceedings and railing at a vexatious police daring to molest travellers and insult the sacred rights of individuals and nations.

The bishop, without answering me, referred me to his chancellor, to whom I repeated all I had said to the bishop, but with words calculated to irritate rather than to soften, and certainly not likely to obtain the release of the captain. I even went so far as to threaten and said that, if I were in the place of the officer, I would demand a public reparation. The priest laughed at my threats; it was just what I wanted, and, after asking me whether I had taken leave of my senses, the chancellor told me to apply to the captain of the *sbirri*.

"I shall go to somebody else," I said, "reverend sir, besides the captain of the *sbirri*."

Delighted at having made matters worse, I left him and proceeded straight to the house of General Spada; but, being told that he could not be seen before eight o'clock, I returned to the inn.

The state of excitement in which I was, the ardour with which I had made the affair mine might have led anyone to suppose that my indignation had been roused only by disgust at seeing an odious persecution perpetrated upon a stranger by an unrestrained, immoral and vexatious police; but why should I deceive the kind reader, to whom I have promised to tell the truth? I must therefore say that my indignation was real, but my ardour was excited by another feeling of a more personal nature. I fancied that the woman concealed under the bedclothes was a beauty; I longed to see her face, which shame, most likely, had prevented her from showing. She had heard me speak, and the good opinion that I had of myself did not leave the shadow of a doubt in my mind that she would prefer me to her captain.

The door of the room being still open, I went in and related to the captain all I had done, assuring him that in the course of the day he would be at liberty to continue his journey at the bishop's expense, for the general would not fail to obtain complete satisfaction for him. He thanked me warmly, gave back the eight ducats I had paid for him and said that he would not leave the city till the next day.

"From what country," I asked him, "is your travelling companion?"

"From France, and he speaks only his native language."

"Then you speak French?"

"Not one word."

"That is amusing! Then you converse in pantomime?"

"Exactly."

"I pity you, for it is a difficult language."

"Yes, to express the various shades of thought, but in the material part of our intercourse we understand each other quite well."

"May I invite myself to breakfast with you?"

"Ask my friend whether he has any objection."

"Amiable companion of the captain," I said in French, "will you kindly accept me as a third guest at the breakfast-table?"

At these words I saw coming out of the bedclothes a lovely head, with dishevelled hair, and a blooming, laughing face which, although it was crowned with a man's cap, left no doubt that the captain's friend belonged to that sex without which man would be the most miserable animal on earth.

Delighted with the graceful creature, I told her that I had been happy enough to feel interested in her even before I had seen her and that, now that I had the pleasure of seeing her, I could but renew with greater zeal all my efforts to serve her.

She answered me with the grace and animation which are the exclusive privilege of her native country and refuted my argument in the wittiest manner; I was already under her charm. My request was granted; I went out to order breakfast and give them an opportunity of sitting up in bed, for they were determined not to get up until the door of their room was locked again.

The waiter came, and I went in with him; I found my lovely Frenchwoman wearing a blue coat, with her hair badly arranged like

a man's, but very charming even in that strange costume. I longed to see her standing up. She ate her breakfast without once interrupting the officer, who was speaking to me, but to whom I was not listening, or listening with very little attention, for I was in a sort of ecstatic trance.

Immediately after breakfast I called on the general and related the affair to him, enlarging upon it in such a manner as to pique his martial pride. I told him that, unless he settled the matter himself, the Hungarian captain was determined to send an express to the cardinal immediately. But my eloquence was unnecessary, for the general liked to see priests attend to the business of Heaven, but he could not bear them to meddle in temporal affairs.

"I shall," he said, "immediately put a stop to this ridiculous comedy and treat it in a very serious manner."

"Go at once to the inn," he said to his aide-de-camp, "invite that officer and his companion to dine with me to-day and repair afterwards to the bishop's palace. Give him notice that the officer who has been so grossly insulted by his *sbirri* shall not leave the city before he has received a complete apology and whatever sum of money he may claim as damages. Tell him that the notice comes from me and that all the expenses incurred here by the officer shall be paid by him."

What pleasure it was for me to listen to these words! In my vanity I fancied I had almost prompted them to the general. I accompanied the aide-de-camp and introduced him to the captain, who received him with the joy of a soldier meeting a comrade. The adjutant gave him the general's invitation for him and his companion and asked him to write down what satisfaction he wanted, as well as the amount of damages he claimed. At the sight of the general's adjutant, the *sbirri* had quickly vanished. I handed to the captain pen, paper and ink, and he wrote his claim in pretty good Latin for a native of Hungary. The excellent fellow absolutely refused to ask for more than thirty sequins, in spite of all I said to make him claim one hundred. He was likewise a great deal too easy as to the satisfaction he demanded, for all he asked was to see the landlord and the *sbirri* beg his pardon on their knees in the presence of the general's adjutant. He threatened the bishop to send an express to Rome to Cardinal Alexander unless his demands were complied with within two hours and to remain in Cesena at the rate of ten sequins a day at the bishop's expense.

The officer left us, and a moment afterwards the landlord came in respectfully to inform the captain that he was free, but, the captain having begged me to tell the scoundrel that he owed him a sound thrashing, he lost no time in gaining the door.

I left my friends alone to get dressed and to attend to my own toilette, as I dined with them at the general's. An hour afterwards I found them ready in their military costumes. The uniform of the Frenchwoman was of course a fancy one but very elegant. The moment I saw her, I gave up all idea of Naples and decided upon accompanying the two friends to Parma. The beauty of the lovely French-

woman had already captivated me. The captain was certainly on the threshold of sixty, and, as a matter of course, I thought such a union very badly assorted. I imagined that the affair which I was already concocting in my brain could be arranged amicably.

The adjutant came back with a priest sent by the bishop, who told the captain that he should have the satisfaction as well as the damages he had claimed, but that he must be content with fifteen sequins.

"Thirty or nothing," dryly answered the Hungarian. They were at last given to him, and thus the matter ended. The victory was due to my exertions, and I had won the friendship of the captain and of his lovely companion.

In order to guess, even at first sight, that the friend of the worthy captain was not a man, it was enough to look at the hips. She was too well made as a woman ever to pass for a man, and the women who disguise themselves in a male attire and boast of being like men are very wrong, for by such a boast they confess themselves deficient in one of the greatest perfections appertaining to woman.

A little before dinner-time we repaired to General Spada's mansion, and the general presented the two officers to all the ladies. Not one of them was deceived in the young officer, but, being already acquainted with the adventure, they were all delighted to dine with the hero of the comedy and treated the handsome officer exactly as if he had truly been a man, but I am bound to confess that the male guests offered the Frenchwoman homages more worthy of her sex.

Madame Querini alone did not seem pleased because the lovely stranger monopolised the general attention, and it was a blow to her vanity to see herself neglected. She never spoke to her except to show off her French, which she could speak well. The poor captain scarcely opened his lips, for no one cared to speak Latin and the general had not much to say in German.

An elderly priest, who was one of the guests, tried to justify the conduct of the bishop by assuring us that the innkeeper and the *sbirri* had acted only under orders of the Holy Office.

"That is the reason," he said, "for which no bolts are allowed in the rooms of the hotels, so that strangers may not shut themselves up in their chambers. The Holy Inquisition does not allow a man to sleep with any woman but his wife."

Twenty years later I found all the doors in Spain with a bolt outside, so that travellers were, as if they had been in prison, exposed to the outrageous molestation of nocturnal visits from the police. That disease is so chronic in Spain that it threatens to overthrow the monarchy some day, and I should not be astonished if one fine morning the Grand Inquisitor was to have the king shaved and take his place.

CHAPTER 23

THE conversation was animated, and the young female officer was entertaining everybody, even Madame Querini, although the latter hardly took the trouble of concealing her spleen.

"It seems strange," she remarked, "that you and the captain should live together without ever speaking to each other."

"Why, Madame? We understand one another perfectly, for speech is of very little consequence in the kind of business we do together."

That answer, given with graceful liveliness, made everybody laugh except Madame Querini-Juliette, who, foolishly assuming the air of a prude, thought that its meaning was too clearly expressed.

"I do not know any kind of business," she said, "that can be transacted without the assistance of the voice or the pen."

"Excuse me, madame, there are some; playing at cards, for instance, is a business of that sort."

"Are you always playing?"

"We do nothing else. We play the game of the Pharaoh (faro), and I hold the bank."

Everybody, understanding the shrewdness of this evasive answer, laughed again, and Juliette herself could not help joining in the general merriment.

"But tell me," said Count Spada, "does the bank receive much?"

"As for the deposits, they are of so little importance that they are hardly worth mentioning."

No one ventured upon translating that sentence for the benefit of the worthy captain. The conversation continued in the same amusing style, and all the guests were delighted with the graceful wit of the charming officer.

Late in the evening I took leave of the general and wished him a pleasant journey.

"Adieu," he said. "I wish you a pleasant journey to Naples and hope you will enjoy yourself there."

"Well, general, I am not going to Naples immediately; I have changed my mind and intend to proceed to Parma, where I wish to see the Infante. I also wish to constitute myself the interpreter of these two officers, who know nothing of Italian."

"Ah, young man! opportunity makes the thief, does it not? Well, if I were in your place, I would do the same."

I also bade farewell to Madame Querini, who asked me to write to her from Bologna. I gave her a promise to do so, but without meaning to fulfil it.

I had felt interested in the young Frenchwoman when she was hiding under the bedclothes; she had taken my fancy the moment she had shown her features, and still more when I had seen her dressed. She completed her conquest at the dinner-table by the display of a wit which I greatly admired. It is rare in Italy and seems to belong

generally to the daughters of France. I did not think it would be very difficult to win her love, and I resolved on trying. Putting fatuous self-esteem aside, I fancied I would suit her much better than the old Hungarian, a very pleasant man for his age but who, after all, carried his sixty years on his face, while my twenty-three were blooming on my countenance. It seemed to me that the captain himself would not raise any great objection, for he seemed one of those men who, treating love as a matter of pure fancy, accept all circumstances easily and give way good-naturedly to all the freaks of fortune. By becoming the travelling companion of this ill-matched couple, I should probably succeed in my aims. I never dreamed of experiencing a refusal at their hands; my company would certainly be agreeable to them, as they could not exchange a single word by themselves.

With this idea I asked the captain, as we reached our inn, whether he intended to proceed to Parma by the public coach or otherwise.

"As I have no carriage of my own," he answered, "we shall have to take a coach."

"I have a very comfortable carriage and offer you the two back seats if you have no objection to my society."

"That is a piece of good fortune. Be kind enough to propose it to Henriette."

"Will you, madame, allow me the honour of accompanying you to Parma?"

"I should be delighted, for we could have some conversation; but take care, sir; your task will not be an easy one, you will often find yourself obliged to translate for both of us."

"I shall do so with great pleasure; I am only sorry that the journey is not longer. We can arrange everything at supper-time; allow me to leave you now, as I have some business to settle."

My business was in reference to a carriage, for the one I had boasted of existed only in my imagination. I went to the most fashionable coffee-house and, as good luck would have it, heard that there was a travelling carriage for sale which no one would buy because it was too expensive. Two hundred sequins were asked for it, although it had but two seats and a bracket-stool for a third person. It was just what I wanted. I called at the place where it could be seen; I found a very fine English carriage which could not have cost less than two hundred guineas. Its noble proprietor was then at supper, so I sent him my name, requesting him not to dispose of his carriage until the next morning, and I went back to the hotel well pleased with my discovery. At supper I arranged with the captain that he would not leave Cesena till after dinner on the following day, and the conversation was almost entirely a dialogue between Henriette and myself; it was my first talk with a Frenchwoman. I thought this young creature more and more charming, yet I could not suppose her to be anything else but an adventuress, and I was astonished at discovering in her those noble and delicate feelings which denote a good education. However, as such an idea would not have suited the views I had

about her, I rejected it whenever it presented itself to my mind. Whenever I tried to make her talk about the captain, she would change the subject of conversation or evade my insinuations with a tact and shrewdness which astonished and delighted me at the same time, for everything she said bore the impress of grace and wit. Yet she did not elude the question:

"At least tell me, madame, whether the captain is your husband or your father."

"Neither one nor the other," she answered, with a smile.

That was enough for me, and in reality what more did I need to know?

The worthy captain had fallen asleep; when he awoke, I wished them both good night and retired to my room, with a heart full of love and a head full of projects. I saw that everything had taken a good turn, and I felt certain of success, for I was young, enjoyed excellent health and had money and plenty of daring. I liked the affair all the better because it must come to a conclusion in a few days.

Early the next morning I called upon Count Dandini, the owner of the carriage, and, as I passed a jeweller's shop, I bought a pair of gold bracelets of Venetian chain, each five ells long and of rare fineness. I intended them as a present for Javotte.

The moment Count Dandini saw me, he recognised me. He had seen me in Padua at the house of his father, who was professor of civil law at the time I was a student there. I bought his carriage, on condition that he would send it to me in good repair at one o'clock in the afternoon.

Having completed the purchase, I went to my friend Franzia, and my present of the bracelets made Javotte perfectly happy. There was not one girl in Cesena who could boast of possessing a finer pair, and with that present my conscience felt at ease, for it paid four times over the expense I had occasioned during my stay of ten or twelve days at her father's house. But this was not the most important present I offered the family. I made the father take an oath to wait for me and never to trust in any pretended magician for the necessary operation to obtain the treasure, even if I did not return or give news of myself for ten years.

"Because," said I to him, "in consequence of the agreement into which I have entered with the spirits watching the treasure, at the first attempt made by any other person, the casket containing the treasure will sink twice its present depth, that is to say, as deep as thirty-five fathoms, and then I shall have myself ten times more difficulty in raising it up to the surface. I cannot state precisely the time of my return, for it depends upon certain combinations which are not under my control; but recollect that the treasure cannot be obtained by anyone but me."

I accompanied my advice with threats of utter ruin to his family if he should ever break his oath. And in this manner I atoned for all I had done, for, far from deceiving the worthy man, I became his

benefactor by guarding against the deceit of some cheat who would have cared for his money more than for his daughter. I never saw him again, and most likely he is dead; but, knowing the deep impression I left on his mind, I am certain that his descendants are even now waiting for me, for the name of Farusi must have remained immortal in that family.

Javotte accompanied me as far as the gate of the city, where I kissed her affectionately, which made me feel that the thunder and lightning had had but a momentary effect upon me; yet I kept control over my senses, and I congratulate myself on doing so to this day. I told her, before bidding her adieu, that, her virginity being no longer necessary for my magic operations, I advised her to get married as soon as possible if I did not return within three months. She shed a few tears but promised to follow my advice.

I trust that my readers will approve of the noble manner in which I concluded my magic business; I hardly dare to boast of it, but I think I deserve some praise for my behaviour. Perhaps I might have ruined poor Franzia with a light heart, had I not possessed a well filled purse. I do not wish to inquire whether any young man having intelligence, loving pleasure and being placed in the same position would not have done the same, but I beg my readers to address that question to themselves.

As for Capitani, to whom I sold the sheath of St. Peter's knife for rather more than it was worth, I confess that I have not yet repented on his account; for Capitani thought he had duped me in accepting it as security for the amount he gave me, and the count, his father, valued it until his death as more precious than the finest diamond in the world. Dying with such a firm belief, he died rich, and I shall die a poor man. Let the reader judge which of the two made the better bargain. But I must return now to my future travelling companions.

As soon as I had reached the inn, I prepared everything for our departure, for which I was now longing. Henriette could not open her lips without my discovering some fresh perfection, for her wit delighted me even more than her beauty. It struck me that the old captain was pleased with all the attention I showed her, and it seemed evident to me that she would not be sorry to exchange her elderly lover for me. I had all the better right to think so inasmuch as I was perfection from a physical point of view and appeared to be wealthy, although I had no servant. I told Henriette that, for the sake of having none, I spent twice as much as a servant would have cost me, that, by my being my own servant, I was certain of being served according to my taste and had the satisfaction of having no spy at my heels and no privileged thief to fear. She agreed with everything I said, and it increased my love.

The honest Hungarian insisted upon giving me in advance the amount to be paid for the post-horses at the different stages as far as Parma. We left Cesena after dinner, but not without a contest of politeness

respecting the seats. The captain wanted me to occupy the back seat near Henriette, but the reader will understand how much better the seat opposite to her suited me; therefore I insisted upon taking the bracket-seat and had the double advantage of showing my politeness and of having constantly and without difficulty before my eyes the lovely woman whom I adored.

My happiness would have been too great if there had been no drawback to it. But where can we find roses without thorns? When the charming Frenchwoman uttered some of those witty sayings which proceed so naturally from the lips of her countrywomen, I could not help pitying the sorry face of the poor Hungarian, and, wishing to make him share my mirth, I would undertake to translate into Latin Henriette's sallies; but, far from making him merry, I often saw his face bear a look of astonishment, as if what I had said seemed to him rather flat. I had to acknowledge to myself that I could not speak Latin as well as she spoke French, and this was indeed the case. The last thing which we learn in all languages is wit, and wit never shines so well as in jests. I was thirty years of age before I began to laugh in reading Terence, Plautus and Martial.

Something being the matter with the carriage, we stopped at Forlì to have it repaired. After a very cheerful supper, I retired to my room to go to bed, thinking of nothing else but the charming woman by whom I was so completely captivated. Along the road Henriette had struck me as so strange that I would not sleep in the second bed in their room. I was afraid lest she leave her old comrade to come to my bed and sleep with me, and I did not know how far the worthy captain would have put up with such a joke. I wished, of course, to possess that lovely creature, but I wanted everything to be settled amicably, for I felt some respect for the brave officer.

Henriette had nothing but the military costume in which she stood, no woman's linen, not even a chemise. For a change of linen she took one of the captain's shirts. Such a state of things was so new to me that the situation seemed to me a complete enigma.

In Bologna, excited by an excellent supper and by the amorous passion which was every hour burning more fiercely in me, I asked her by what singular adventure she had become the friend of the honest fellow who looked her father, rather than her lover.

"If you wish to know," she answered, with a smile, "ask him to relate the whole story himself; only you must request him not to omit any of the particulars."

Of course I applied at once to the captain, and, having first ascertained by signs that the charming Frenchwoman had no objection, the good man spoke to me thus:

"A friend of mine, an officer in the army, having occasion to go to Rome, I solicited a furlough of six months and accompanied him. I seized with great delight the opportunity of visiting a city the name of which has a powerful influence on the imagination, owing to the memories of the past attached to it. I did not entertain any doubt that

the Latin language was spoken there in good society, at least as generally as in Hungary. But I was indeed greatly mistaken, for nobody can speak it, not even the priests, who only pretend to write it, and it is true that some of them do so with great purity. I was therefore rather uncomfortable during my stay in Rome, and, with the exception of my eyes, my senses remained perfectly inactive. I had spent a very tedious month in that city, the ancient queen of the world, when Cardinal Albani gave my friend dispatches for Naples. Before leaving Rome, he introduced me to His Eminence, and his recommendation had so much influence that the cardinal promised to send me very soon with dispatches for the Duke of Parma, Piacenza and Guastella, assuring me that all my travelling expenses would be defrayed. As I wished to see the harbour called in former times "Centum Cellae" and now Civita Vecchia, I gave up the remainder of my time to that visit and proceeded there with a cicerone who spoke Latin.

"I was loitering about the harbour when I saw, coming out of a tartan, an elderly officer and this young woman, dressed as she is now. Her beauty struck me; but I should not have thought any more about it, if the officer had not put up at my inn, and in an apartment over which I had a complete view whenever I opened my window. In the evening I saw the couple taking supper at the same table, but I remarked that the elderly officer never addressed a word to the young one. When the supper was over, the disguised girl left the room, and her companion did not lift his eyes from a letter which he was reading, as it seemed to me, with the deepest attention. Soon afterwards the officer closed the windows, the light was put out, and I suppose my neighbours went to bed. The next morning, being up early, as is my habit, I saw the officer go out, and the girl remained alone in the room.

"I sent my cicerone, who was also my servant, to tell the girl in the garb of an officer that I would give her ten sequins for an hour's conversation. He fulfilled my instructions and on his return informed me that her answer, given in French, had been to the effect that she would leave for Rome immediately after breakfast, and that, once in that city, I would easily find some opportunity of speaking to her.

"*"I can find out from the vetturino,"* said the cicerone, *"where they put up in Rome, and I promise you to inquire of him."*

"She left Civita Vecchia with the elderly officer, and I returned home on the following day.

"Two days afterwards the cardinal gave me the dispatches, which were addressed to M. Dutillot, the French minister, with a passport and the money necessary for the journey. He told me, with great kindness, that I need not hurry on the road.

"I had almost forgotten the handsome adventuress, when, two days before my departure, my cicerone gave me the information that he had found out where she lived and that she was with the same officer. I told him to try to see her and let her know that my departure was fixed for the day after the morrow. She sent me word by him that, if

1 would inform her of the hour of my departure, she would meet me outside the gate and get into the coach with me, to accompany me on my way. I thought the arrangement very ingenious and during the day sent the cicerone to tell her the hour at which I intended to leave and where I would wait for her outside the Porto del Popolo. She came at the appointed time, and we have remained together ever since. As soon as she was seated near me, she made me understand by signs that she wanted to dine with me. You may imagine what difficulty we had in understanding one another, but we guessed somehow the meaning expressed by our pantomime, and I accepted the adventure with delight.

"We dined gaily together, speaking without understanding; but after the dessert we comprehended each other very well. I fancied that I had seen the end of it, and you may imagine how surprised I was when, upon my offering her the ten sequins, she refused most positively to take my money, making me understand that she would rather go with me to Parma because she had some business in that city and did not want to return to Rome.

"The proposal was, after all, rather agreeable to me; I consented to her wishes. I only regretted my inability to make her understand that, if she was followed by anyone from Rome and if that person wanted to take her back, I was not in a position to defend her against violence. I was also sorry that, with our mutual ignorance of the language spoken by each of us, we had no opportunity of conversation, for I should have been greatly pleased to hear her adventures, which, I think, must be interesting. You can, of course, guess that I have no idea who she can be. I only know she calls herself Henriette, that she must be a French woman, that she is as gentle as a turtle-dove, that she has evidently received a good education and enjoys good health. She is witty and courageous, as we have both seen, I in Rome and you in Cesena at General Spada's table. If she would tell you her history and allow you to translate it for me into Latin, she would indeed please me much, for I am sincerely her friend and can assure you that it will grieve me to part from her in Parma. Please to tell her that I intend to give her the thirty sequins I received from the Bishop of Cesena and that, if I were rich, I would give her more substantial proofs of my tender affection. Now, sir, I shall feel obliged to you if you will explain it all to her in French."

I asked her whether she would feel offended if I gave her an exact translation; she assured me that, on the contrary, she wished me to speak openly, and I told her literally what the captain had related to me.

With a noble frankness, which a slight shade of shame rendered more interesting, Henriette confirmed the truth of her friend's narrative, but she begged me to tell him that she could not grant his wish respecting the adventures of her life.

"Be good enough to inform him," she added, "that the same principle which forbids me to utter a falsehood does not allow me to tell

the truth. As for the thirty sequins which he intends to give me, I will not accept even one of them, and he would deeply grieve me by pressing them upon me. The moment we reach Parma, I wish him to allow me to lodge wherever I may please, to make no inquiries whatever about me and, in case he should happen to meet me, to crown his great kindness to me by not appearing ever to have known me."

As she uttered the last words of this short speech, which she had delivered very seriously and with a mixture of modesty and resolution, she kissed her elderly friend in a manner which indicated esteem and gratitude, rather than love. The captain, who did not know why she was kissing him, was deeply grieved when I translated what Henriette had said. He begged me to tell her that, if he was to obey her with an easy conscience, he must know whether she would have everything she required in Parma.

"You can assure him," she answered, "that he need not entertain any anxiety about me."

This conversation had made us all very sad; we remained for a long time thoughtful and silent, until, feeling the situation to be painful, I rose, wishing them good night, and I saw that Henriette's face wore a look of great excitement.

As soon as I found myself alone in my room, deeply moved by conflicting feelings of love, surprise and uncertainty, I began to give vent to my feelings in a kind of soliloquy, as I always do when I am strongly excited by anything; thinking is not in those cases enough for me; I must speak aloud, and I throw so much action, so much animation into these monologues that I forget I am alone. What I knew now of Henriette had upset me altogether.

"Who can she be," I said, speaking to the walls, "this girl who seems to have the most elevated feelings under the veil of the most cynical libertinism? She says that in Parma she wishes to remain perfectly unknown, her own mistress, and I cannot, of course, flatter myself that she will not place me under the same restrictions as the captain, to whom she has already abandoned herself. Goodbye to my expectations, to my money and my illusions! But who is she? What is she? She must have either a lover or a husband in Parma, or she must belong to a respectable family; or, perhaps, thanks to a boundless love for debauchery and to confidence in her own charms, she intends to set fortune, misery and degradation at defiance and try to enslave some wealthy nobleman! But that would be the plan of a madwoman or of a person reduced to utter despair, which does not seem to be the case with Henriette. Yet she possesses nothing. True; but she refused, as if she had been provided with all she needed, the kind assistance of a man who has the right to offer it and from whom in sooth she can accept without blushing, since she has not been ashamed to grant him favours with which love had nothing to do. Does she think that it is less shameful for a woman to abandon herself to the desires of a man unknown and unloved than to receive a present from an esteemed friend, and particularly on the eve of finding herself in

the street, entirely destitute, in the middle of a foreign city, amongst people whose language she cannot even speak? Perhaps she thinks that such conduct will justify the *faux pas* of which she has been guilty with the captain, and give him to understand that she abandoned herself to him only for the sake of escaping from the officer with whom she was in Rome. But she ought to be quite certain that the captain does not entertain any other idea; he shows himself so reasonable that it is impossible to suppose he ever admitted the possibility of having inspired her with a violent passion because she had seen him once through a window in Civita Vecchia. She might possibly be right and feel herself justified in her conduct towards the captain, but it is not the same with me, for with her intelligence she must be aware that I would not have travelled with them if she had been unattractive to me, and she must know that there is but one way in which she can obtain my pardon. She may be endowed with many virtues, but she has not the only one which could prevent me from wishing the reward which every man expects to receive at the hands of the woman he loves. If she wants to assume prudish manners towards me and make a dupe of me, I am bound in honour to show her how much she is mistaken."

After this monologue, which had made me still more angry, I made up my mind to have an explanation in the morning before our departure.

"I shall ask her," said I to myself, "to grant me the same favours which she has so easily granted to her old captain, and, if I meet with a refusal, the best revenge will be to show her a cold and profound contempt until our arrival in Parma."

I felt sure that she could not refuse me some marks of real or pretended affection, unless she wished to make a show of a modesty which certainly did not belong to her, and, knowing that her modesty would only be all pretence, I was determined not to be a mere toy in her hands.

As for the captain, I felt certain, from what he had told me, that he would not be angry with me if I risked a declaration, for, as a sensible man, he could only assume a neutral position.

Satisfied with my wise reasoning, and with my mind fully made up, I fell asleep. My thoughts were too completely absorbed by Henriette for her not to haunt my dreams; but the dream which I had throughout the night was so much like reality that, on awaking, I looked for her in my bed and my imagination was so deeply struck with the delights of that night that, if the door had not been fastened with a bolt, I should have believed that she had left me during my sleep to resume her place near the worthy Hungarian.

When I was awake I found that the happy dream of the night had turned my love for the lovely creature into a perfect amorous frenzy, and it could not be otherwise. Let the reader imagine a poor devil going to bed broken with fatigue and starvation; he succumbs to sleep, that most imperative of all human wants, but in his dream he finds himself

before a table covered with every delicacy; what will then happen? Why, a very natural result. His appetite, much more lively than on the previous day, does not give him a minute's rest—he must satisfy it or die of sheer hunger.

I dressed myself, resolved on making sure of the possession of the woman who had inflamed all my senses, even before resuming our journey.

"If I do not succeed," I said to myself, "I will not go one step further."

But, in order not to offend against propriety and deserve the reproaches of an honourable man, I felt that it was my duty to have an explanation with the captain in the first place.

I fancy that I hear one of those sensible, calm, passionless readers, who have had the advantage of what is called "a youth without storms," or one of those whom old age has forced to become virtuous, exclaim, "Can anyone attach so much importance to such nonsense?"

Age has calmed my passions by rendering them powerless, but my heart has not grown old, and my memory has kept all the freshness of youth; and, far from considering that sort of thing a mere trifle, my only sorrow, dear reader, arises from the fact that I have not the power to practise, to the day of my death, that which has been the principal affair of my life!

When I was ready, I repaired to the chamber occupied by my two travelling companions, and, after paying them the usual morning compliments, I told the officer that I was deeply in love with Henriette, and asked him whether he would object to my trying to obtain her as my mistress.

"The reason for which she begs you," I added, "to leave her in Parma and not take any further notice of her must be that she hopes to meet some lover of hers there. Let me have half an hour's conversation with her, and I flatter myself I can persuade her to sacrifice that lover for me. If she refuses me, I remain here; you will go with her to Parma, where you will leave my carriage at the post, only sending me a receipt, so that I can claim it whenever I please."

"As soon as breakfast is over," said the excellent man, "I shall go and visit the Institute and leave you alone with Henriette. I hope you may succeed, for I should be delighted to see her under your protection when I part with her. Should she persist in her first resolution, I could easily find a *vetturino* here, and you could keep your carriage. I thank you for your proposal, and it will grieve me to leave you."

Highly pleased at having accomplished half of my task, and at seeing myself near the *dénouement*, I asked the lovely Frenchwoman whether she would like to see the sights of Bologna.

"I should like it very much," she said, "if I had some other clothes; but with such a costume as this I do not care to show myself about the city."

"Then you do not want to go out?"

"No."

"May I keep you company?"

"That would be delightful."

The captain went out immediately after breakfast. The moment he had gone, I told Henriette that her friend had left us alone purposely, so as to give me the opportunity of a private interview with her.

"Tell me now whether you intended for me as well as for him the order which you gave him yesterday to forget you, never to inquire after you and even not to know you if he happened to meet you, from the time of our arrival in Parma."

"It is not an order that I gave him; I have no right to do so, and I could not so far forget myself; it is only a prayer I addressed to him, a service which circumstances have compelled me to claim at his hands, and, as he has no right to refuse me, I never entertained any doubt of his granting my demand. As far as you are concerned, it is certain that I would have addressed the same prayer to you if I had thought that you had any views about me. You have given me some marks of your friendship, but you must understand that if, under the circumstances, I am likely to be injured by the kind attentions of the captain, yours would injure much more. If you have any friendship for me, you would have felt all that."

"As you know that I entertain great friendship for you, you cannot possibly suppose that I would leave you alone, without money, without resources, in the middle of a city where you cannot even make yourself understood. Do you think that a man who feels for you the most tender affection can abandon you when he has been fortunate enough to make your acquaintance, when he is aware of the sad position in which you are placed? If you think such a thing possible, you must have a very false idea of friendship, and, should such a man grant your request, he would only prove that he is not your friend."

"I am certain that the captain is my friend; yet you have heard him, he will obey me and forget me."

"I do not know what sort of affection that honest man feels for you, or how far he can rely upon the control he may have over himself, but I know that, if he can grant you what you have asked from him, his friendship must be of a nature very different to mine, for I am bound to tell you that it is not only impossible for me to afford you willingly the strange gratification of my abandoning you in your position, but even that, if I go to Parma, you could not possibly carry out your wishes because I love you so passionately that you must promise to be mine or I must remain here. In that case you must go to Parma alone with the captain, for I feel that, if I accompanied you any further, I should be the most wretched of men. I could not bear to see you with another lover, with a husband, not even in the midst of your family; in fact, I would fain see you and live with you forever. Let me tell you, lovely Henriette, that, if it is possible for a Frenchman to forget, an Italian cannot, at least if I judge from my own feelings. I have made up my mind; you must be good enough to decide now and to tell me whether I am to accompany you or to remain here."

Answer 'yes' or 'no.' If I remain here, it is all over; I shall leave for Naples to-morrow, and I know I shall be cured in time of the mad passion I feel for you; but, if you tell me that I can accompany you to Parma, you must promise me that your heart will forever belong to me alone. I must be the only one to possess you, but I am ready to accept as a condition, if you like, that you shall not crown my happiness until you have judged me worthy of it by my attentions and by my loving care. Now be kind enough to decide before the return of the too happy captain. He knows all, for I have told him what I feel."

"And what did he answer?"

"That he would be happy to see you under my protection. But what is the meaning of that smile playing on your lips?"

"Pray allow me to laugh, for I have never in my life realised the idea of a furious declaration of love. Do you understand what it is to say to a woman in a declaration which ought to be passionate, but at the same time tender and gentle, the following terrible words, 'Madame, make your choice, either one or the other, and decide instantly!' Ha! ha! ha!"

"Yes, I understand perfectly; it is neither gentle, nor gallant, nor pathetic, but it is passionate. Remember that this is a serious matter and that I have never yet found myself so much pressed by time. Can you, on your side, realise the painful position of a man who, being deeply in love, finds himself compelled to make a decision which may perhaps decide issues of life and death? Be good enough to remark that, in spite of the passion raging in me, I do not fail in the respect I owe you, that the resolution I intend to take, if you should persist in your original decision, is not a threat but an effort worthy of a hero, which ought to call for your esteem. I beg of you to consider that we cannot afford to lose time. The word 'choose' should not sound harshly in your ears, since it leaves my fate as well as yours entirely in your hands. To feel certain of my love, do you want to see me kneeling before you like a simpleton, crying and entreating you to take pity on me? No, madame, that would certainly displease you and would not help me. I am conscious of being worthy of your love, I therefore ask for that feeling and not for pity. Quit me, if I displease you, but let me go away; for, if you are humane enough to wish that I should forget you, allow me to go far away from you, so as to make my sorrow less immense. Should I follow you to Parma, I would not answer for myself, for I might give way to my despair. Consider everything well, I beseech you; you would indeed be guilty of great cruelty, were you to answer now, 'Come to Parma, although I must beg of you not to see me in that city.' Confess that you cannot, in all fairness, give me such an answer. Am I not right?"

"Certainly, if you truly love me."

"Good God! if I love you? Oh, yes! believe me, my love is immense, sincere! Now decide my fate."

"What! always the same song?"

"Yes."

"But are you aware that you look very angry?"

"No, for it is not so; I am only in a state of uncontrollable excitement, in one of those decisive hours of my life, a prey to the most fearful anxiety. I ought to curse my whimsical destiny and the *sbirri* of Cesena (may God curse them, too!) for, but for them, I should never have known you."

"Are you, then, so very sorry to have made my acquaintance?"

"Have I not some reason to be?"

"No, for I have not given you my decision yet."

"Now I breathe more freely, for I am sure you will tell me to accompany you to Parma."

"Yes, come to Parma."

CHAPTER 24

THE reader can easily guess that there was a change as sudden as a transformation in a pantomime and that the short but magic sentence, "Come to Parma," proved a very fortunate catastrophe, thanks to which I rapidly changed, passing from the tragic to the gentle mood, from the serious to the tender tone. Sooth to say, I fell at her feet and lovingly pressing her knees, kissed them repeatedly with raptures of gratitude. No more *furore*, no more bitter words; they do not suit the sweetest of all human feelings! Loving, docile, grateful, I swear never to beg for any favour, not even to kiss her hand, until I have shown myself worthy of her precious love! The heavenly creature, delighted to see me pass so rapidly from despair to the most lively tenderness, tells me, with a voice the tone of which breathes of love, to get up from my knees.

"I am sure that you love me," says she, "and be quite certain that I shall leave nothing undone to secure the constancy of your feelings."

Even if she had said that she loved me as much as I adored her, she would not have been more eloquent, for her words expressed all that can be felt. My lips were pressed to her beautiful hands as the captain entered the room. He complimented us with perfect good faith, and I told him, my face beaming with happiness, that I was going to order the carriage. I left them together, and in a short time we were on our road, cheerful, pleased and merry.

Before reaching Reggio, the honest captain told me that in his opinion it would be better for him to proceed to Parma alone, as, if we arrived in that city all together, it might cause some remarks, and people would talk about us much less if we were without him. We both thought him quite right and immediately made up our minds to pass the night in Reggio, while the captain would take a post-chaise and go alone to Parma. According to that arrangement, his trunk was transferred to the vehicle which he hired in Reggio; he bade us farewell and went away, after having promised to dine with us on the following day in Parma.

The decision taken by the worthy Hungarian was doubtless as agreeable to my lovely friend as to me, for our delicacy would have condemned us to a great reserve in his presence. And truly, under the new circumstances, how were we to arrange for our lodgings in Reggio? Henriette could not, of course, share the captain's bed any more, and she could not have slept with me as long as he was with us without being guilty of great immodesty. We should all three have laughed at that compulsory reserve which we would have felt to be ridiculous, but we should, for all that, have submitted to it. Love is a little impudent god, the enemy of bashfulness, although he may very often enjoy darkness and mystery, but, if he gives way to shame, he feels disgraced; he loses three-fourths of his dignity and a great part of his charms.

Evidently there could be no happiness for Henriette or for me unless we parted with the person, and even with the remembrance, of the excellent captain.

We supped alone; I was intoxicated with a felicity which seemed too immense, and yet I felt melancholy, but Henriette, who looked sad likewise, had no reproach to address to me. Our sadness was in reality nothing but shyness; we loved each other, but we had had no time to become acquainted. We exchanged only a few words, there was nothing witty, nothing interesting in our conversation, which struck us both as insipid, and we found more pleasure in the thoughts which filled our minds. We knew that we were going to pass the night together, but we could not have spoken of it openly. What a night! What a delightful creature was that Henriette, whom I have loved so deeply, who has made me so supremely happy!

It was only three or four days later that I ventured on asking her what she would have done, without a groat in her possession, having not one acquaintance in Parma, if I had been afraid to declare my love and had gone to Naples. She answered that she would doubtless have found herself in very great difficulties, but that she had all along felt certain of my love and had foreseen what happened. She added that, being impatient to know what I thought of her, she had asked me to translate to the captain what she had expressed respecting her resolution, knowing that he could neither oppose that resolution nor continue to live with her and that, as she had taken care not to include me in the prayer which she had addressed to him through me, she had thought it impossible that I should fail to ask whether I could be of some service to her, waiting to make a decision until she could ascertain the nature of my feelings towards her. She concluded by telling me that, if she had fallen, it was the fault of her husband and her father-in-law, both of whom she characterised as monsters, rather than men.

When we reached Parma, I gave the police the name of Farusi, the same that I had assumed in Cesena—it was my mother's family name—while Henriette wrote down, "Anne d'Arci, from France." While we were answering the officer's questions a young Frenchman, smart

and intelligent-looking, offered me his services and advised me not to put up at the posting-inn, but to take lodgings at D'Andremont's hotel, where I should find good apartments, French cooking and the best French wines.

Seeing that Henriette was pleased with the proposal, I told the young man to take us there, and we were soon very comfortably lodged. I engaged the Frenchman by the day and carefully settled all my arrangements with D'Andremont. After that I attended to the housing of my carriage.

Coming in again for a few minutes, I told Henriette that I would return in time for dinner, and, ordering the servant to remain in the ante-room, I went out alone.

Parma was then groaning under a new government; I had every reason to suppose that there were spies everywhere and under every form; I therefore did not want to have at my heels a valet who might have injured rather than served me. Though I was in my father's native city, I had no acquaintance there, but I knew that I should soon find my way.

When I found myself in the streets, I scarcely could believe that I was in Italy, for everything had a tramontane appearance. I heard nothing but French and Spanish, and those who did not speak one of those languages seemed to be whispering to one another. I was going about at random, looking for a hosier, yet unwilling to inquire where I could find one; at last I saw what I wanted.

I entered the shop and, addressing myself to a stout, good-looking woman seated behind the counter, said, "Madame, I wish to make some purchases."

"Sir, shall I send for someone who speaks French?"

"You need not do so, I am an Italian."

"God be praised! Italians are scarce in these days."

"Why scarce?"

"Do you not know that Don Filippo has arrived, and that his wife, Madame de France, is on the road?"

"I congratulate you, for it must make trade very good. I suppose that money is plentiful and there is abundance of all commodities."

"That is true, but everything is high in price, and we cannot get reconciled to these new fashions. They are a bad mixture of French freedom and Spanish haughtiness, which addles our brains. But, sir, what sort of linen do you require?"

"In the first place, I must tell you that I never try to drive a hard bargain, therefore be careful. If you charge me too much, I shall not come again. I want some fine linen for twenty-four chemises, some dimity for stays and petticoats, some muslin, some cambric for pocket handkerchiefs, and many other articles which I should be very glad to find in your shop, for I am a stranger here and God knows in what hands I am going to trust myself!"

"You will be in honest ones if you will give me your confidence."

"I am sure that you deserve it, and I abandon my interests to you."

I want likewise to find some needlewomen willing to work in the lady's room, because she requires everything to be made very rapidly."

"And dresses?"

"Yes, dresses, caps, mantles—in fact, everything, for she is naked."

"With money she will soon have all she wants. Is she young?"

"She is four years younger than I; she is my wife."

"Ah! may God bless you! Any children?"

"Not yet, my good lady; but they will come, for we do all that is necessary to have them."

"I have no doubt of it. How pleased I am! Well, sir, I shall send for the very phoenix of all dressmakers. In the meantime, choose what you require; it will occupy your time."

I took the best of everything and paid, and, the dressmaker making her appearance at that moment, I gave my address, requesting that various sorts of stuff might be sent at once. I told the dressmaker and her daughter, who had come with her, to follow me and carry the linen. On my way to the hotel I bought several pairs of silk stockings and took with me a bootmaker who lived close by. Oh, what a delightful moment! Henriette, who had not the slightest idea of what I had gone out for, looked at everything with great pleasure, yet without any of those demonstrations which announce a selfish or interested disposition; she showed her gratitude only by the delicate praise which she bestowed on my taste and the quality of the articles I had purchased. She was not more cheerful on account of my presents, but the tender affection with which she looked at me was the best proof of her grateful feelings.

The valet I had hired had entered the room with the shoemaker; Henriette told him quietly to withdraw and not to come unless he was called. The dressmaker set to work, the shoemaker took her measure, and I told him to bring some slippers. He returned in a short time, and the valet came in again with him without having been called. The shoemaker, who spoke French, was talking the usual nonsense of dealers when she interrupted him to ask the valet, who was standing familiarly in the room, what he wanted.

"Nothing, madame, I am only waiting for your orders."

"Did I not tell you that you would be called when your services were required?"

"I should like to know who is my master, you or the gentleman?"

"Neither," I replied, laughing. "Here are your day's wages; be off at once."

The shoemaker, seeing that Henriette spoke only French, begged to recommend a teacher of languages.

"What country does he belong to?" she inquired.

"To Flanders, madame," answered Crispin. "He is a very learned man, about fifty years old; he is said to be a good man. He charges three libbre for each lesson of one hour, and six for two hours, but he requires to be paid each time."

"My dear," said Henriette to me, "do you wish me to engage that master?"

"Yes, dearest; it will amuse you."

The shoemaker promised to send the Flemish professor the next morning.

The dressmakers were hard at work, the mother cutting and the daughter sewing, but, as progress could not be too rapid, I told the mother that she would oblige us if she could procure another seamstress who spoke French.

"You shall have one this very day, sir," she answered, and she offered me the services of her own son as servant, saying that, if I took him, I should be certain to have neither a thief nor a spy about me and that he spoke French pretty well. Henriette thought we could not do better than take the young man; of course that was enough to make me consent at once, for the slightest wish of the woman we love is our supreme law. The mother went for him and brought back at the same time the half-French dressmaker. It all amused my god-dess, who looked very happy.

The young man was about eighteen, pleasant, gentle and modest. I inquired his name, and he answered that it was Caudagna.

The reader may very likely recollect that my father's native place had been Parma, and that one of his sisters had married a Caudagna. "It would be a curious coincidence," I thought, "if that dressmaker should be my aunt, and my valet, my cousin!" But I did not say it aloud.

Henriette asked me if I had any objection to the first dressmaker dining at our table.

"I entreat you, my darling," I answered, "never hereafter to ask my consent in such trifling matters. Be quite certain, my beloved, that I shall always approve everything you may do."

She smiled and thanked me. I took out my purse and said to her, "Take these fifty sequins, dearest, to pay all your small expenses and to buy the many trifles which I should be sure to forget."

She took the money, assuring me that she was vastly obliged to me.

A short time before dinner the worthy captain made his appearance. Henriette ran to meet him and kissed him, calling him her dear father, and I followed her example by calling him my friend. My beloved little wife invited him to dine with us every day. The excellent fellow, seeing all the women working busily for Henriette, was highly pleased at having procured such a good position for his young adventuress, and I crowned his happiness by telling him that I was indebted to him for my felicity.

Our dinner was delicious, and it proved a cheerful meal. I found out that Henriette was dainty, and my old friend a lover of good wines. I was both and felt that I was a match for them. We tasted several excellent wines which D'Andremont had recommended, and altogether we had a very good dinner.

The young valet pleased me in consequence of the respectful manner

in which he served everyone, his mother as well as his masters. His sister and the other seamstress had dined apart.

We were enjoying our dessert when the hosier was announced, accompanied by another woman and a milliner who could speak French. The other woman had brought patterns of all sorts of dresses. I let Henriette order caps, head-dresses, etc., as she pleased, but I would interfere in the dress department, although I complied with the excellent taste of my charming friend. I made her choose four dresses and was indeed grateful for her ready acceptance of them, for my own happiness was increased in proportion to the pleasure I gave her and the influence I was obtaining over her heart.

Thus did we spend the first day, and we could certainly not have accomplished more.

In the evening, as we were alone at supper, I fancied that her lovely face looked sad; I told her so.

"My darling," she answered, with a voice which went to my heart, "you are spending a great deal of money on me, and, if you do so in the hope of my loving you more dearly, I must tell you it is money lost, for I do not love you now more than I did yesterday, but I do love you with my whole heart. All you may do that is not strictly necessary pleases me only because I see more and more how worthy you are of me, but it is not needed to make me feel all the deep love which you deserve."

"I believe you, dearest, and my happiness is indeed great if you feel that your love for me cannot be increased. But learn also, delight of my heart, that I have done it all only to try to love you even more than I do, if possible. I wish to see you beautiful and brilliant in the attire of your sex, and if there is one drop of bitterness in the fragrant cup of my felicity, it is a regret at not being able to surround you with the halo which you deserve. Can I be otherwise than delighted, my love, if you are pleased?"

"You cannot for one moment doubt my being pleased, and, as you have called me your wife, you are right in one way; but, if you are not very rich, I leave it to you to judge how deeply I ought to reproach myself."

"Ah, my beloved angel! let me, I beg of you, believe myself wealthy, and be quite certain that you cannot possibly be the cause of my ruin. You were born only for my happiness. All I wish is that you may never leave me; tell me whether I can entertain such a hope."

"I wish it myself, dearest; but who can be sure of the future? Are you free? Are you dependent on anyone?"

"I am free in the broadest meaning of that word; I am dependent on no one but you, and I love to be so."

"I congratulate you, and I am very glad of it, for no one can tear you from my arms; but, alas! you know that I cannot say the same as you. I am certain that some persons are even now seeking for me, and they will not find it very difficult to secure me if they ever dis-

cover where I am. Alas! I feel how miserable I should be if they ever succeeded in dragging me away from you!"

"You make me tremble. Are you afraid of such a dreadful misfortune here?"

"No, unless I should happen to be seen by someone knowing me."

"Are any such persons likely to be here at present?"

"I think not."

"Then do not let our love take alarm; I trust your fears will never be verified. Only, my darling one, you must be as cheerful as you were in Cesena."

"I shall be more truly so now, dear friend. In Cesena I was miserable, while now I am happy. Do not be afraid of my being sad, for I am of a naturally cheerful disposition."

"I suppose that in Cesena you were afraid of being caught by the officer whom you had left in Rome?"

"Not at all; that officer was my father-in-law, and I am quite certain that he never tried to ascertain where I had gone; he was only too glad to get rid of me. I felt unhappy because I could not bear to be a charge on a man whom I could not love and with whom I could not even exchange one thought. Recollect also that I could not find consolation in the idea that I was ministering to his happiness, for I had inspired him with only a passing fancy, which he had himself valued at ten sequins. I could not help feeling that his fancy, once gratified, was not likely at his time of life to become a more lasting sentiment, and I could therefore only be a burden to him, for he was not wealthy. Besides, there was a miserable consideration which increased my secret sorrow. I thought myself bound in duty to caress him, and on his side, as he thought that he ought to pay me in the same money, I was afraid of his ruining his health for me, and that idea made me very unhappy. Having no love for each other, we allowed a foolish feeling of regard to make both of us uncomfortable. We lavished, for the sake of a well meant but false decorum, that which belongs to love alone. Another thing troubled me greatly; I was afraid lest people might suppose that I was a source of profit to him. That idea made me feel the deepest shame; yet, whenever I thought of it, I could not help admitting that such a supposition, however false, was not wanting in probability. It is owing to that feeling that you found me so reserved toward you, for I was afraid that you might harbour that fearful idea if I allowed you to read in my looks the favourable impression which you had made on my heart."

"Then it was not owing to a feeling of self-love?"

"No, I confess it; for you could but judge me as I deserved. I had been guilty of the folly now known to you because my father-in-law intended to bury me in a convent and that did not suit my taste. But, dearest friend, you must forgive me if I cannot confide even to you the story of my life."

"I respect your secret, darling; you need not fear any intrusion

from me on that subject. All we have to do is to love one another and not to allow any dread of the future to mar our present felicity."

The next day, after a night of intense enjoyment, I found myself more deeply in love than before, and the next three months were spent by us in an intoxication of delight.

At nine o'clock the next morning the teacher of Italian was announced. I saw a man of respectable appearance, polite, modest, speaking little but well, reserved in his answers and with the manners of olden times. We conversed, and I could not help laughing when he said, with an air of perfect good faith, that a Christian could admit the system of Copernicus only as a clever hypothesis. I answered that it was the system of God Himself because it was that of nature and that it was not in Holy Scripture that the laws of science could be learned.

The teacher smiled in a manner which betrayed the Tartuffe, and, if I had consulted only my own feelings, I should have dismissed the poor man, but I thought that he might amuse Henriette and teach her Italian; after all, it was what I wanted from him. My dear wife told him that she would give him six libbre for a lesson of two hours; the libbra of Parma being worth only about threepence, his lessons were not very expensive. She took her first lesson immediately and gave him two sequins, asking him to purchase her some good novels.

Whilst my dear Henriette was taking her lesson, I had some conversation with the dressmaker in order to ascertain whether she was a relative of mine.

"What does your husband do?" I asked her.

"He is steward to the Marquis of Sissa."

"Is your father still alive?"

"No, sir, he is dead."

"What was his family name?"

"Scotti."

"Are your husband's parents still alive?"

"His father is dead, but his mother is still alive and resides with her uncle, Canon Casanova."

That was enough; the good woman was my Welsh cousin, and her children were my Welsh nephews. My niece Jeanneton was not pretty, but she appeared to be a good girl. I continued my conversation with the mother, but I changed the topic.

"Are the Parmesans satisfied with being the subjects of a Spanish prince?"

"Satisfied? Well, in that case we should be easily pleased, for we are now in a regular maze; everything is upset, we do not know where we are. Oh! happy times of the house of Farnese, whither have you departed? The day before yesterday I went to the theatre, and Harlequin made everybody roar with laughter. Well now, fancy! Don Filippo, our new duke, did all he could to remain serious, and, when he could not manage it, he would hide his face in his hat so that people should not see that he was laughing, for it is said that laughter

ought never to disturb the grave and stiff countenance of an Infante of Spain and that he would be dishonoured in Madrid if he did not conceal his mirth. What do you think of that? Can such manners suit us? Here we laugh willingly and heartily! Oh! the good Duke Antonio (God rest his soul!) was certainly as great a prince as Duke Filipo, but he did not hide himself from his subjects when he was pleased, and he would sometimes laugh so heartily that he could be heard in the streets. Now we are all in the most fearful confusion, and for the last three months no one in Parma knows what's o'clock."

"Have all the clocks been destroyed?"

"No; but, ever since God created the world, the sun has always gone down at half-past five, and at six the bells have always been tolled for the Angelus; all respectable people knew that at that time the candle had to be lit. Now it is very strange, the sun has gone mad, for he sets every day at a different hour. Our peasants do not know when they are to come to market. All that is called a regulation, but do you know why? Because now everybody knows that dinner is to be eaten at twelve o'clock. A fine regulation, indeed! Under the Farnese we used to eat when we were hungry, and that was much better."

That way of reasoning was certainly singular, but I did not think it sounded foolish in the mouth of a woman of humble rank. It seems to me that a government ought never to destroy ancient customs abruptly and that innocent errors ought to be corrected only by degrees.

Henriette had no watch; I felt delighted at the idea of offering her such a present and went out to purchase one, but after I had bought a very fine watch, I thought of earrings, a fan and many other pretty nicknacks; of course I bought them all at once. She received all these gifts offered by love with a tender delicacy which overjoyed me. She was still with the teacher when I came back.

"I should have been able," he said to me, "to teach your lady heraldry, geography, history and the use of the globes, but she knows that already. She has received an excellent education."

The teacher's name was Valentin de la Haye; he told me he was an engineer and a professor of mathematics. I shall have to speak of him very often in these *Memoirs*, and my readers will make his acquaintance by his deeds better than by any portrait I could give of him, so I will merely say that he was a true Tartuffe, a worthy pupil of Escobar.

We had a pleasant dinner with our Hungarian friend; Henriette was still wearing the uniform, and I longed to see her dressed as a woman. She expected a dress to be ready for the next day and was already supplied with petticoats and chemises.

Henriette was full of wit and a mistress of repartee. The milliner, who was a native of Lyons, came in one morning, and said in French, "*Madame et monsieur, j'ai l'honneur de vous souhaiter le bonjour.*"

"Why," said my friend, "do you not say *Monsieur et madame*?"

"I have always noticed that in polite society the precedence is given to the ladies."

"But from whom do we wish to receive that honour?"

"From the men, of course."

"And do you not see that women would render themselves ridiculous if they did not grant to men the same that they expect from them? If we wish them never to fail in politeness towards us, we must show them the example."

"Madame," answered the shrewd milliner, "you have taught me an excellent lesson, and I will profit by it. *Monsieur et madame, je suis votre servante.*"

This feminine controversy greatly amused me.

Those who do not believe that a woman can make a man happy through the twenty-four hours of the day have never possessed a woman like Henriette. The happiness which filled me, if I can express it in that manner, was even greater when I conversed with her than when I held her in my arms. She had read much, she had great tact, and her taste was naturally excellent; her judgment was sane, and, without being learned, she could argue like a mathematician, easily and without pretension; and in everything she had that natural grace which is so charming. She never tried to be witty when she said something of importance, but accompanied her words with a smile which imparted to them an appearance of trifling and brought them within the understanding of all. In that way she would give intelligence even to those who had none, and she won every heart. Beauty without wit offers love nothing but the material enjoyment of its physical charms, whilst witty ugliness captivates by the charms of the mind and in the end fulfils all the desires of the man it has captivated.

Then what was my position during all the time that I possessed my beautiful and witty Henriette? That of a man so supremely happy that I could scarcely realise my felicity!

Let anyone ask a beautiful woman without wit whether she would be willing to exchange a small portion of her beauty for a sufficient dose of wit. If she speaks the truth, she will say, "No, I am satisfied to be as I am." But why is she satisfied? Because she is not aware of her own deficiency. Let an ugly but witty woman be asked if she would exchange her wit against beauty, and she will not hesitate in saying "no." Why? Because, knowing the value of her wit, she is well aware that it is sufficient by itself to make her a queen in any society.

But a learned woman, a blue-stocking, is not the creature to minister to a man's happiness. Positive knowledge is not a woman's province; it is antipathetic to the gentleness of her nature, to the amenity, the sweet timidity which are the greatest charms of the fair sex; besides, women never carry their learning beyond certain limits, and the tittle-tattle of blue-stockings can dazzle no one but fools. There has never been one great discovery due to a woman. The fair sex is deficient in that vigorous power which the body lends to the mind, but women are evidently superior to men in simple reasoning, delicacy of feelings

and that species of merit which appertains to the heart rather than to the mind.

Hurl some idle sophism at a woman of intelligence; she will not unravel it, but she will not be deceived by it, and, though she may not say so, she will give you to understand that she does not accept it. A man, on the contrary, if he cannot unravel the sophism, takes it in a literal sense, and in that respect the learned woman is exactly the same as a man. What a burden a Madame Dacier must be to a man! May God save every honest man from such!

When the new dress was brought, Henriette told me that she did not want me to witness the process of her metamorphosis, and she desired me to go out for a walk until she had resumed her original form. I obeyed cheerfully, for the slightest wish of the woman we love is a law and our very obedience increases our happiness.

As I had nothing particular to do, I went to a French bookseller, in whose shop I made the acquaintance of a witty hunchback; and I must say that a hunchback without wit is a *rara avis*; I have found it so in all countries. Of course it is not wit which gives the hump, for, thank God, all witty men are not humpbacked, but we may well say that, as a general rule, the hump gives wit; for the very small number of hunchbacks who have little or no wit only confirms the rule. The one I was alluding to just now was called Dubois-Chateleraux. He was a skilful engraver, and Director of the Mint of Parma for the Infante, although that prince could not boast of such an institution.

I spent an hour with the witty hunchback, who showed me several of his engravings, and I returned to the hotel, where I found the Hungarian waiting to see Henriette. He did not know that she would that morning receive us in the attire of her sex. The door was thrown open, and a beautiful, charming woman met us with a curtsy full of grace, which no longer reminded us of the stiffness or of the too great freedom which belong to the military costume. Her sudden appearance certainly astonished us, and we did not know what to say or what to do. She invited us to be seated, looked at the captain in a friendly manner and pressed my hand with the warmest affection, but without giving way any more to that outward familiarity which a young officer can assume, but which does not suit a well-educated lady. Her noble and modest bearing soon compelled me to put myself in unison with her, and I did so without difficulty, for she was not acting a part and the way in which she had resumed her natural character made it easy for me to follow her on that ground.

I was gazing at her with admiration and, urged by a feeling which I did not take time to analyse, took her hand to kiss it with respect; but, without giving me an opportunity of raising it to my lips, she offered me her lovely mouth; never did a kiss taste so delicious.

"Am I not then still the same?" said she to me, with deep feeling.

"No, heavenly creature, and it is so true that you are no longer the same in my eyes that I could not now use any familiarity towards you. You are no longer the witty, free young officer who told Madame

Querini about the game of Pharaoh and about the deposits made to your bank by the captain in so niggardly a manner that they were hardly worth mentioning."

"It is very true that, wearing the costume of my sex, I should never dare to utter such words. Yet, dearest friend, it does not prevent my being your Henriette—that Henriette who has in her life been guilty of three escapades, the last of which would have utterly ruined me if it had not been for you, but which I call a delightful error since it has been the cause of my knowing you."

Those words moved me so deeply that I was on the point of throwing myself at her feet, to entreat her to forgive me for not having shown her more respect; but Henriette, who saw the state in which I was and who wanted to put an end to the pathetic scene, began to shake our poor captain, who sat as motionless as a statue and as if he had been petrified. He felt ashamed at having treated such a woman as an adventuress, for he knew that what he now saw was not an illusion. He kept looking at her with great confusion and bowing most respectfully, as if he wanted to atone for his past conduct towards her. As for Henriette, she seemed to say to him, but without the shadow of a reproach, "I am glad that you think me worth more than ten sequins."

We sat down to dinner, and from that moment Henriette did the honours of the table with the perfect ease of a person who is accustomed to fulfil that difficult duty. She treated me like a beloved husband and the captain like a respected friend. The poor Hungarian begged me to tell her that, if he had seen her as she was now in Civita Vecchia, when she came out of the tartan, he never would have dreamed of dispatching his cicerone to her room.

"Oh! tell him that I do not doubt it. But is it not strange that a poor little female dress should command more respect than the garb of an officer?"

"Pray do not abuse the officer's costume, for it is to it that I am indebted for my happiness."

"Yes," she said, with a loving smile, "as I owe mine to the *sbirri* of Cesena."

We remained for a long time at the table, and our delightful conversation turned upon no other topic than our mutual felicity; if it had not been for the uneasiness of the poor captain, which at last struck us, we should never have put a stop either to the dinner or to our charming prattle.

CHAPTER 25

THE happiness I was enjoying was too complete to last long; I was fated to lose it—but I must not anticipate events. Madame de France, wife of the Infante Don Filippo, having arrived in Parma, the opera house was opened, and I engaged a private box, telling Henriette that

I intended to take her to the theatre every night. She had several times confessed that she had a great passion for music, and I had no doubt that she would be pleased with my proposal. She had never yet seen an Italian opera, and I felt certain that she wished to ascertain whether the Italian music deserved its universal fame. But I was indeed surprised when she exclaimed, "What, dearest! You wish to go every evening to the opera?"

"I think, my love, that, if we did not go, we should give some excuse for scandalmongers to gossip. Yet, should you not like it, you know that there is no need for us to go; do not think of me, for I prefer our pleasant chat in this room to the heavenly concert of the seraphs."

"I am passionately fond of music, darling, but I cannot help trembling at the idea of going out."

"If you tremble, I must shudder; but we ought to go to the opera or leave Parma; let us go to London or any other place. Give your orders; I am ready to do anything you like."

"Well, take a private box as little exposed as possible."

"How kind you are!"

The box I had engaged was in the second tier, but, the theatre being small, it was difficult for a pretty woman to escape observation. I told her so.

"I do not think there is any danger," she answered, "for I have not seen the name of any person of my acquaintance in the list of foreigners which you gave me to read."

Thus did Henriette go to the opera; I had taken care that our box should not be lighted up. It was an opera bouffe, the music of Burellano was excellent, and the singers were very good.

Henriette made no use of her opera glass except to look on the stage, and nobody paid any attention to us. As she had been greatly pleased with the *finale* of the second act, I promised to get it for her and asked Dubois to procure it for me. Thinking she could play the harpsichord, I offered to get one, but she told me that she had never touched that instrument.

On the night of the fourth or fifth performance M. Dubois came to our box, and, as I did not wish to introduce him to my friend, I only asked what I could do for him. He then handed me the music I had begged him to purchase for me, and I paid him what it had cost, offering him my best thanks. As we were just opposite the ducal box, I asked him, for the sake of saying something, whether he had engraved the portraits of their highnesses. He answered that he had already engraved two medals, and I gave him an order for both, in gold. He promised to let me have them and left the box. Henriette had not even looked at him, and that was according to all established rules, as I had not introduced him; but the next morning he was announced as we were at dinner. M. de la Haye, who was dining with us, complimented us upon having made the acquaintance of Dubois and introduced him to his pupil the moment he came into the room.

It was then right for Henriette to welcome him, which she did most gracefully.

After she had thanked him for the *partizione*, she begged he would get her some other music, and the artist accepted her request as a favour granted to him.

"Sir," said Dubois to me, "I have taken the liberty of bringing the medals you wished to have; here they are."

On one were the portraits of the Infante and his wife; on the other was engraved only the head of Don Filippo. They were both beautifully engraved, and we expressed our just admiration.

"The workmanship is beyond all price," said Henriette, "but the gold can be bartered for other gold."

"Madame," answered the modest artist, "the medals weigh sixteen sequins." She gave him the amount immediately and invited him to call again at dinner-time. Coffee was just brought in at that moment, and she asked him to take it with us. Before sweetening his cup, she inquired whether he liked his coffee very sweet.

"Your taste, madame," answered the hunchback, gallantly, "is sure to be mine."

"Then you have guessed that I always drink coffee without sugar; I am glad we have that taste in common."

And she gracefully offered him the cup of coffee without sugar; she then helped De la Haye and me, not forgetting to put plenty of sugar in our cups, and poured out one for herself exactly like the one she handed to Dubois. It was much ado for me not to laugh, for my mischievous Frenchwoman, who liked her coffee in the Parisian fashion—that is to say, very sweet—was sipping the bitter beverage with an air of delight which compelled the Director of the Mint to smile under the infliction. But the cunning hunchback was even with her; accepting the penalty of his foolish compliment and praising the good quality of the coffee, he boldly declared that it was the only way to taste the delicious aroma of the precious berry.

When Dubois and De la Haye had left us, we both laughed at the trick.

"But," said I to Henriette, "you will be the first victim of your mischief, for, whenever he dines with us, you must keep up the joke, in order not to betray yourself."

"Oh! I can easily contrive to drink my coffee well sweetened and to make him drain the bitter cup."

At the end of one month, Henriette could speak Italian fluently, and it was owing more to the constant practice she had every day with my cousin Jeanneton, who acted as her maid, than to the lessons of Professor de la Haye. The lessons taught her only the rules, and practice is necessary to acquire a language. I have experienced it myself; I learned more French during the too short period that I spent so happily with my charming Henriette than in all the lessons I had taken from Dalacqua.

We had attended the opera twenty times without making any

acquaintance, and our life was indeed supremely happy. I never went out without Henriette and always in a carriage; we never received anyone, and nobody knew us. Dubois was the only person, since the departure of the good Hungarian, who sometimes dined with us; I do not reckon De la Haye, who was a daily guest at our table. Dubois felt great curiosity about us, but he was cunning and did not show his curiosity; we were reserved without affectation, and his inquisitiveness was at fault. One day he mentioned to us that the court of the Infante of Parma was very brilliant since the arrival of Madame de France and that there were many foreigners of both sexes in the city. Then, turning towards Henriette, he said to her, "Most of the foreign ladies whom we have here are unknown to us."

"Very likely many of them would not show themselves if they were known."

"Very likely, madame, as you say; but I can assure you that, even if their beauty and the richness of their toilette made them conspicuous, our sovereigns wish for freedom. I still hope, madame, that we shall have the happiness of seeing you at the court of the duke."

"I do not think so, for, in my opinion, it is superlatively ridiculous for a lady to go to the court without being presented, particularly if she has a right to be so."

The last words, on which Henriette had laid a little more stress than upon the first part of her answer, struck our little hunchback dumb, and my friend, improving her opportunity, changed the subject of conversation.

When he had gone, we enjoyed the check she had thus given to the inquisitiveness of our guest, but I told Henriette that, in good conscience, she ought to forgive all those whom she rendered curious, because —. She cut my words short by covering me with loving kisses.

Thus supremely happy and finding in one another constant satisfaction, we would laugh at those morose philosophers who deny that complete happiness can be found on earth.

"What do they mean, darling, those crazy fools, by saying that happiness is not lasting, and how do they understand that word? If they mean everlasting, immortal, unintermitting, of course they are right; but the life of man not being such, happiness, as a natural consequence, cannot be such either. Otherwise, every happiness is lasting for the very reason that it does exist, and, to be lasting, it requires only to exist. But if by 'complete felicity' they mean a series of varied and never interrupted pleasures, they are wrong because, by allowing after each pleasure the calm which ought to follow the enjoyment of it, we have time to realise happiness in its reality; in other words, those necessary periods of repose are a source of true enjoyment because, thanks to them, we enjoy the delight of recollection, which increases twofold the reality of happiness. Man can be happy only when in his own mind he realises his happiness, and calm is necessary to give full play to his mind; therefore, without calm, man would truly never be

completely happy, and pleasure, in order to be felt, must cease to be active. Then what do they mean by that word 'lasting'?

"Every day we reach a moment when we long for sleep; and, although it be the very likeness of non-existence, can anyone deny that sleep is a pleasure? No—at least, it seems to me that it cannot be denied with consistency, for, the moment it comes to us, we give it the preference over all other pleasures, and we are grateful to it only after it has left us.

"Those who say that no one can be happy throughout life speak likewise frivolously. Philosophy teaches the secret of securing that happiness, provided one is free from bodily sufferings. A felicity which would thus last throughout life could be compared to a nosegay formed of a thousand flowers so beautifully, so skilfully blended together, that it would look like one single flower. Why should it be impossible for us to spend here the whole of our life as we have spent the last month, always in good health, always loving one another, without ever feeling any other want or any weariness? Then, to crown that happiness, which would certainly be immense, all that would be wanted would be to die together at an advanced age, conversing of our pleasant recollections. Surely that felicity would have been lasting. Death would not interrupt it, for death would end it. We could not, even then, suppose ourselves unhappy unless we dreaded unhappiness after death, and such an idea strikes me as absurd, for it is a contradiction of the idea of an almighty and fatherly tenderness."

It was thus that my beloved Henriette would often make me spend delightful hours, talking philosophic sentiment; her logic was better than that of Cicero in his *Tusculan Disputations*, but she admitted that such lasting felicity could exist only between two beings who lived together and loved each other with constant affection, healthy in mind and body, enlightened, sufficiently rich, similar in tastes, disposition and temperament. Happy are those lovers who, when their senses require rest, can fall back upon the intellectual enjoyments afforded by the mind! Sweet sleep then comes and lasts until the body has recovered its general harmony. On awaking, the senses are again active and always ready to resume their action.

The conditions of existence are exactly the same for man as for the universe; I might almost say that between them there is perfect identity, for, if we take the universe away, mankind no longer exists, and, if we take mankind away, there is no longer a universe; who could realise the idea of the existence of inorganic matter? Now, without that idea, *nihil est*, since the idea is the essence of everything and man alone has ideas. Besides, if we abstract the species, we can no longer imagine the existence of matter, and *vice versa*.

I derived from Henriette as great happiness as that charming woman derived from me. We loved one another with all the strength of our faculties and were everything to each other. She would often repeat those pretty lines of the good La Fontaine:

*Soyez-vous l'un à l'autre un monde toujours beau,
Toujours divers, toujours nouveau;
Tenez-vous lieu de tout; comptez pour rien le reste.*

And we did not fail to put the advice into practice, for never did a minute of ennui or weariness, never did the slightest trouble disturb our bliss.

The day after the close of the opera, Dubois, who was dining with us, said that on the following day he was entertaining the two first artists, *primo cantatore* and *prima cantatrice*, and added that, if we liked to come, we would hear some of their best pieces, which they were to sing in a lofty hall of his country house particularly adapted to the display of the human voice. Henriette thanked him warmly, but said that, her health being very delicate, she could not engage herself beforehand, and she turned the conversation to other topics.

When we were alone, I asked her why she had refused the pleasure offered by Dubois.

"I would accept his invitation," she answered, "and with delight if I were not afraid of meeting at his house some person who might know me and who would destroy the happiness I am now enjoying with you."

"If you have any fresh motive for dreading such an occurrence you are quite right; but, if it is only a vague, groundless fear, my love, why should you deprive yourself of a real and innocent pleasure? If you knew how pleased I am when I see you enjoy yourself, and particularly when I witness your ecstasy in listening to fine music!"

"Well, darling, I do not want to show myself less brave than you. We will go immediately after dinner. The artists will not sing before. Besides, as he does not expect us, he is not likely to have invited any person curious to speak to me. We will go without giving him notice of our coming, without being expected and as if we wanted to pay him a friendly visit. He told us that he would be at his country house, and Caudagna knows where it is."

Her reasons were a mixture of prudence and love, two feelings which are seldom blended together. My answer was to kiss her with as much admiration as tenderness, and the next day at four o'clock in the afternoon we paid our visit to M. Dubois. We were much surprised, for we found him alone with a very pretty girl, whom he presented to us as his niece.

"I am delighted to see you," he said, "but, as I did not expect to see you, I altered my arrangements, and, instead of the dinner I had intended to give, I have invited my friends to supper; I hope you will not refuse me the honour of your company. The two *virtuosi* will soon be here."

We were compelled to accept his invitation.

"Will there be many guests?" I inquired.

"You will find yourselves in the midst of people worthy of you," he answered, triumphantly. "I am only sorry that I have not invited any ladies."

This polite remark, which was intended for Henriette, made her drop him a curtsey, which she accompanied with a smile. I was pleased to read contentment on her countenance; but alas! she was concealing the painful anxiety which she felt acutely. Her noble mind refused to show any uneasiness, and I could not guess her inmost thoughts because I had no idea that she had anything to fear.

I would have thought and acted differently if I had known all her history. Instead of remaining in Parma, I should have gone with her to London, and I know now that she would have been delighted to go there.

The two artists arrived soon afterwards; they were the *primo cantatore* Laschi, and the *prima donna* Baglioni, then a very pretty woman. The other guests soon followed; all of them were Frenchmen and Spaniards of a certain age. No introductions took place, and I read the tact of the witty hunchback in the omission; but, as all the guests were men used to the manners of the court, that neglect of etiquette did not prevent them from paying every honour to my lovely friend, who received their compliments with that ease and good breeding which are known only in France—and even there only in the highest society, with the exception, however, of a few French provinces in which the nobility, wrongly called “good society,” show rather too openly the haughtiness which is characteristic of that class.

The concert began by a magnificent symphony, after which Laschi and Baglioni sang a duet with great talent and much taste. They were followed by a pupil of the celebrated Vandini, who played a *concerto* on the violoncello, and who was warmly applauded.

The applause had not yet ceased when Henriette, leaving her seat, went up to the young artist and told him with modest confidence, as she took the violoncello from him, that she could bring out the beautiful tone of the instrument still better. I was struck with amazement. She took the young man’s seat, placed the violoncello between her knees and begged the leader of the orchestra to begin the *concerto* again. The deepest silence prevailed; I was trembling all over and almost fainting. Fortunately every look was fixed upon Henriette, and nobody thought of me. Nor was she looking towards me; she would not have then ventured even one glance, for she would have lost courage if she had raised her beautiful eyes to my face. However, not seeing her disposing herself to play, I was beginning to imagine that she had only been indulging in a jest, when she suddenly made the strings resound; my heart was beating with such force that I thought I should drop down dead.

But let the reader imagine my situation when, the *concerto* being over, well merited applause burst from every part of the room! The rapid change from extreme fear to excessive pleasure brought on an excitement which was like a violent fever. The applause did not seem to have any effect upon Henriette, who, without raising her eyes from the notes, which she saw for the first time, played six pieces with the greatest perfection. As she rose from her seat, she did not thank the guests for their applause, but, addressing the young artist with affability, told

him with a sweet smile that she had never played on a finer instrument. Then, curtsying to the audience, she said:

"I entreat your forgiveness for a moment of vanity which has made me encroach on your patience for half an hour."

The nobility and grace of this remark completely upset me, and I ran out to weep like a child in the garden, where no one could see me.

"Who is she, this Henriette?" I said to myself, my heart beating and my eyes swimming with tears of emotion. "What is this treasure I have in my possession?"

My happiness was so immense that I felt myself unworthy of it.

Lost in these thoughts which enhanced the pleasure of my tears, I would have stayed for a long time in the garden if Dubois had not come out to look for me. He felt anxious about me, owing to my sudden disappearance, and I quieted him by saying that a slight giddiness had compelled me to come out to breathe the fresh air.

Before re-entering the room, I had time to dry my tears, but my eyelids were still red. Henriette, however, was the only one to take notice of it, and she said to me, "I know, my darling, why you went into the garden."

She knew me so well that she could easily guess the impression made on my heart by the evening's occurrence.

Dubois had invited the most amiable noblemen of the court, and his supper was dainty and well arranged. I was seated opposite Henriette, who was, as a matter of course, monopolising the general attention, but she would have met with the same success if she had been surrounded by a circle of ladies, whom she would certainly have thrown into the shade by her beauty, her wit and the distinction of her manners. She was the charm of that supper by the animation she imparted to the conversation. M. Dubois said nothing, but he was proud to have such a lovely guest in his house. She contrived to say a few gracious words to everyone and was shrewd enough never to utter something witty without making me take share in it. On my side, I openly showed my submissiveness, my deference and my respect for that divinity, but it was all in vain; she wanted everybody to know that I was her lord and master. She might have been taken for my wife, but my behaviour toward her rendered such a supposition improbable.

The conversation having fallen on the respective merits of the French and Spanish nations, Dubois was foolish enough to ask Henriette to which she gave preference.

It would have been difficult to ask a more indiscreet question, considering that the company was composed almost entirely of Frenchmen and Spaniards in about equal proportion. Yet my Henriette turned the difficulty so cleverly that the Frenchmen would have liked to be Spaniards and *vice versa*. Dubois, nothing daunted, begged her to say what she thought of the Italians; that question made me tremble. A certain M. de la Combe, who was seated near me, shook his head in token of disapprobation, but Henriette did not try to elude the question.

"What can I say about the Italians?" she answered. "I know only

one. If I am to judge them all from that one, my judgment must certainly be most favourable to them, but one single example is not sufficient to establish the rule."

It was impossible to give a better answer, but, as my readers may well imagine, I appeared not to have heard it and, being anxious to prevent any more indiscreet questions from Dubois, turned the conversation into a different channel.

The subject of music was discussed, and a Spaniard asked Henriette whether she could play any other instrument besides the violoncello.

"No," she answered, "I never felt any inclination for any other. I learned the violoncello at the convent to please my mother, who can play it pretty well; but for an order from my father, sanctioned by the bishop, the abbess would never have given me permission to practise it."

"What objection could the abbess make?"

"That devout spouse of Our Lord pretended that I could not play that instrument without assuming an indecent position."

At this the Spanish guests bit their lips, but the Frenchmen laughed heartily and did not spare their epigrams against the over-particular abbess.

After a short silence Henriette rose, and we all followed her example; it was the signal for breaking up the party, and we soon took our leave.

I longed to find myself alone with the idol of my soul. I asked her a hundred questions without waiting for the answers.

"Ah! you were right, my own Henriette, when you refused to go to that concert, for you knew that you would raise many enemies against me. I am certain that all those men hate me, but what do I care? You are my universe! Cruel darling, you almost killed me with your violoncello because, having no idea of your being a musician, I thought you had gone mad, and, when I heard you, I was compelled to leave the room in order to weep undisturbed. My tears relieved my fearful oppression. Oh! I entreat you to tell me what other talents you possess; tell me candidly, for you might kill me if you brought them out unexpectedly, as you did this evening."

"I have no other accomplishments, my best beloved; I have emptied my bag all at once; now you know your Henriette entirely. Had you not chanced to tell me about a month ago that you had no taste for music, I would have told you that I could play the violoncello remarkably well; but, if I had mentioned such a thing, I know you well enough to be certain that you would have bought an instrument immediately; and I could not, dearest, find pleasure in anything that would weary you."

The very next morning she had an excellent violoncello, and, far from wearying me, each time she played, she caused me a new and greater pleasure. I believe that it would be impossible even for a man disliking music not to become passionately fond of it if that art were practised to perfection by the woman he adores.

The *vox humana* of the violoncello, the king of instruments, went to my heart every time my beloved Henriette performed upon it. She knew

I loved to hear her play, and every day she afforded me that pleasure. Her talent delighted me so much that I proposed to her to give some concerts, but she was prudent enough to refuse my proposal. But, in spite of all her prudence, we had no power to hinder the decrees of fate.

The fatal hunchback came the day after his fine supper to thank us and to receive our well merited praises of his concert, his supper and the distinction of his guests.

"I foresee, madame," he said to Henriette, "all the difficulty I shall have in defending myself against the prayers of all my friends who will beg of me to introduce them to you."

"You need not have much trouble on that score; you know that I never receive anyone."

Dubois did not again venture upon speaking of introducing any friend.

On the same day I received a letter from young Capitani, in which he informed me that, being the owner of St. Peter's knife and sheath, he had called upon Franzia with two learned magicians who had promised to raise the treasure out of the earth and that, to his great surprise, Franzia had refused to receive him. He entreated me to write to the worthy fellow and go to him myself if I wanted to have my share of the treasure. I need not say that I did not comply with his wishes, but I can vouch for the real pleasure I felt in finding that I had succeeded in saving that honest and simple farmer from the impostors who would have ruined him.

One month was gone since the great supper given by Dubois; we had passed it in all the enjoyment which can be derived from both the senses and the mind, and never had one single instant of weariness caused either of us to be guilty of that sad symptom of misery which is called a yawn. The only pleasure we took out of doors was a drive outside of the city when the weather was fine. As we never walked in the streets and never frequented any public place, no one had sought to make Henriette's acquaintance, or at least no one had found an opportunity of doing so, in spite of all the curiosity excited by her amongst the persons whom we had chanced to meet, particularly at the house of Dubois. Henriette had become more courageous and I more confident when we found that she had not been recognised by anyone either at that supper or at the theatre. She dreaded only persons belonging to the high nobility.

One day, as we were driving outside the Gate of Colorno, we met the duke and duchess, who were returning to Parma. Immediately after their carriage another vehicle drove along, in which was Dubois with a nobleman unknown to us. Our carriage had gone only a few yards from theirs when one of our horses fell down. Dubois's companion immediately ordered his coachman to stop, in order to send to our assistance. Whilst the horse was raised again, he came politely to our carriage and paid some civil compliment to Henriette. M. Dubois, always a shrewd courtier and anxious to show off at the expense of others, lost no time

in introducing him as M. Dutillot, the French ambassador. My sweetheart gave the conventional bow. The horse being all right again, we proceeded on our road, after thanking the gentlemen for their courtesy. Such an everyday occurrence could not be expected to have any serious consequences, but alas! the most important events are often the result of very trifling circumstances!

The next day Dubois breakfasted with us. He told us frankly that M. Dutillot had been delighted at the fortunate chance which had afforded him an opportunity of making our acquaintance and had entreated him to ask our permission to call on us.

"On madame or on me?" I asked at once.

"On both."

"Very well, but one at a time. Madame, as you know, has her own room and I have mine."

"Yes, but they are so near each other!"

"Granted; yet I must tell you that, as far as I am concerned, I should have much pleasure in waiting upon His Excellency if he should ever wish to communicate with me, and you will oblige me by letting him know it. As for madame, she is here; speak to her, my dear M. Dubois, for I am only her very humble servant."

Henriette assumed an air of cheerful politeness and said to him, "Sir, I beg you will offer my thanks to M. Dutillot and inquire from him whether he knows me."

"I am certain, madame," said the hunchback, "that he does not."

"You see he does not know me, and yet he wishes to call on me. You must agree with me that, if I accepted his visits, I should give him a singular opinion of my character. Be good enough to tell him that, although known to no one and knowing no one, I am not an adventuress and therefore must decline the honour of his visits."

Dubois felt that he had taken a false step and remained silent. We never asked him how the ambassador had received our refusal.

Three weeks after the last occurrence, the ducal court residing then at Colorno, a great entertainment was given in the gardens, which were to be illuminated all night and everybody had permission to walk about in them. Dubois, the fatal hunchback appointed by destiny, spoke so much of that festival, that we took a fancy to see it: always the same old story of Adam's apple. Dubois accompanied us. We went to Colorno the day before the entertainment and put up at an inn.

In the evening we walked through the gardens, in which we happened to meet the ducal family and suite. According to the etiquette of the French court, Madame de France was the first to curtsy to Henriette, without stopping. My eyes fell upon a gentleman walking by the side of Don Luis, who was looking at my friend very attentively. A few minutes after, as we were retracing our steps, we came across the same gentleman, who, after bowing respectfully to us, took Dubois aside. They conversed together for a quarter of an hour, following us all the time, and we were passing out of the gardens when the gentleman, com-



The ducal court residing then at Colorno, a great entertainment was given in the gardens, which were to be illuminated all night. Dubois, the fatal hunchback appointed by destiny, accompanied us, and in the evening we walked through the gardens.

ing forward and politely apologising to me, asked Henriette whether he had the honour to be known to her.

"I do not recollect having ever had the honour of seeing you before."

"That is enough, madame, and I entreat you to forgive me."

Dubois informed us that the gentleman was the intimate friend of Infante Don Luis, and that, believing he knew madame, he had begged to be introduced. Dubois had answered that her name was d'Arci and that, if he was known to the lady, he required no introduction. M. d'Antoine said that the name of d'Arci was unknown to him and that he was afraid of making a mistake. "In that state of doubt," added Dubois, "and wishing to clear it, he introduced himself; but now he must see that he was mistaken."

After supper, Henriette appeared anxious; I asked her whether she had only pretended not to know M. d'Antoine.

"No, dearest, I can assure you. I know his name, which belongs to an illustrious family of Provence, but I have never seen him before."

"Perhaps he may know you?"

"He may have seen me, but I am certain that he never spoke to me, or I would have recollected him."

"That meeting causes me great anxiety, and it seems to have troubled you."

"I confess it has disturbed my mind."

"Let us leave Parma at once and proceed to Genoa. We will go to Venice as soon as my affairs there are settled."

"Yes, my dear friend, we shall then feel more comfortable. But I do not think we need be in any hurry."

We returned to Parma, and two days afterwards my servant handed me a letter, saying that the footman who had brought it was waiting in the ante-room.

"This letter," I said to Henriette, "troubles me."

She took it and, after she had read it, gave it back to me, saying, "I think M. d'Antoine is a man of honour, and I hope that we have nothing to fear."

The letter ran as follows:

"Either at your hotel or at my residence or at any place you may wish to appoint, I entreat you, sir, to give me an opportunity of conversing with you on a subject which must be of the greatest importance to you.

"I have the honour to be, etc.

D'ANTOINE."

It was addressed to M. Farusi.

"I think I must see him," I said, "but where?"

"Neither here nor at his residence, but in the ducal gardens. Your answer must name only the place and the hour of the meeting."

I wrote to M. d'Antoine that I would see him at half-past eleven in the ducal gardens, only requesting him to appoint another hour in case mine was not convenient to him.

I dressed myself at once in order to be in good time, and meanwhile we both endeavoured, Henriette and I, to keep a cheerful countenance,

but we could not silence our sad forebodings. I was exact to my appointment and found M. d'Antoine waiting for me. As soon as we were together, he said to me:

"I have been compelled, sir, to beg from you the favour of an interview, because I could not imagine any surer way to get this letter to Madame d'Arci's hands. I entreat you to deliver it to her and to excuse me if I give it you sealed. Should I be mistaken, my letter will not even require an answer, but, should I be right, Madame d'Arci alone can judge whether she ought to communicate it to you. That is my reason for giving it to you sealed. If you are truly her friend, the contents of that letter must be as interesting to you as to her. May I hope, sir, that you will be good enough to deliver it to her?"

"Sir, on my honour I will do it."

We bowed respectfully to each other and parted company. I hurried back to the hotel.

CHAPTER 26

As soon as I had reached our apartment, my heart bursting with anxiety, I repeated to Henriette every word spoken by M. d'Antoine and delivered his letter, which contained four pages of writing. She read it attentively, with visible emotion, and then said:

"Dearest friend, do not be offended, but the honour of two families does not allow of my imparting to you the contents of this letter. I am compelled to receive M. d'Antoine, who represents himself as being one of my relatives."

"Ah!" I exclaimed, "this is the beginning of the end! What a dreadful thought! I am near the end of a felicity which was too great to last! Wretch that I have been! Why did I tarry so long in Parma? What fatal blindness! Of all the cities in the whole world, except in France, Parma was the only one I had to fear, and it is here that I brought you, when I could have taken you anywhere else, for you had no will but mine! I am all the more guilty that you never concealed your fears from me. Why did I introduce that fatal Dubois here? Ought I not to have guessed that his curiosity would sooner or later prove injurious to us? And yet I cannot condemn that curiosity, for it is, alas! a natural feeling. I can only accuse all the perfections which Heaven has bestowed upon you, perfections which have caused my happiness and which will plunge me into an abyss of despair, for, alas! I foresee a future of fearful misery."

"I entreat you, dearest, to foresee nothing and to calm yourself. Let us avail ourselves of all our reason in order to prove ourselves superior to circumstances, whatever they may be. I cannot answer this letter, but you must write to M. d'Antoine to call here to-morrow and to send up his name."

"Alas! you compel me to perform a painful task."

"You are my best, my only friend; I demand nothing, I impose no task upon you, but can you refuse me?"

"No, never, no matter what you ask. Dispose of me, I am yours in life and in death."

"I knew what you would answer. You must be with me when M. d'Antoine calls, but, after a few minutes given to etiquette, you will please find some pretext to go to your room and leave us alone. M. d'Antoine knows all my history; he knows in what I have done wrong, in what I have been right; as a man of honour, as my relative, he must shelter me from all affront. He shall not do anything against my will, and, if he attempts to deviate from the conditions I shall dictate to him, I will refuse to go to France, I will follow you anywhere and devote to you the remainder of my life. Yet, my darling, recollect that some fatal circumstances may compel us to consider our separation as the wisest course to adopt, that we must husband all our courage to adopt it, if necessary, and endeavour not to be too unhappy. Have confidence in me and be quite certain that I shall take care to reserve for myself the small portion of happiness which I can be allowed to enjoy without the man who alone has won all my devoted love. You will have, I trust—and I expect it from your generous soul—the same care of your future, and I feel certain that you must succeed. In the meantime let us drive away all the sad forebodings which might darken the hours we have yet before us."

"Ah! why did we not go away immediately after we had met that accursed favourite of the Infante?"

"We might have made matters much worse; for in that case M. d'Antoine might have made up his mind to give my family a proof of his zeal by instituting a search to discover our place of residence, and I should then have been exposed to violent proceedings, which you would not have endured; it would have been fatal to both of us."

I did everything she asked me; from that moment our love became sad, and sadness is a disease which gives the deathblow to affection. We would often remain a whole hour looking at one another without exchanging a single word, and our sighs would be heard, whatever we did to hush them.

The next day, when M. d'Antoine called, I followed exactly the instructions she had given me and for six mortal hours remained alone, pretending to write.

The door of my room was open, and a large looking-glass allowed us to see each other. They spent those six hours in writing, occasionally stopping to talk of I know not what, but their conversation was evidently a decisive one. The reader can easily realise how much I suffered during that long torture, for I could expect nothing but the total wreck of my happiness.

As soon as the terrible M. d'Antoine had taken leave of her, Henriette came to me, and, observing that her eyes were red, I heaved a deep sigh, but she tried to smile.

"Shall we go away to-morrow, dearest?" she asked.

"Oh! yes, I am ready. Where do you wish me to take you?"

"Anywhere you like, but we must be back here in a fortnight."

"Here! Oh, fatal illusion!"

"Alas! it is so. I have promised to be here to receive the answer to a letter I have just written. We have no violent proceedings to fear, but I cannot bear to remain in Parma."

"Ah! I curse the hour which brought us to this city. Would you like to go to Milan?"

"Yes."

"As we are unfortunately compelled to come back, we may as well take with us Caudagna and his sister."

"As you please."

"Let me arrange everything I will order a carriage for them, and they will take charge of your violoncello. Do you not think that you ought to let M. d'Antoine know where we are going?"

"No; it seems to me, on the contrary, that I need not account to him for any of my proceedings. So much the worse for him if he should, even for one moment, doubt my word."

The next morning we left Parma, taking only what we needed for an absence of a fortnight. We arrived in Milan without accident, but both very sad, and spent the following fifteen days in constant *tête-à-tête*, without speaking to anyone except the landlord of the hotel and a dress-maker. I presented my beloved Henriette with a magnificent pelisse made of lynx fur, a present which she prized highly.

Out of delicacy she had never inquired about my means, and I felt grateful to her for that reserve; I was very careful to conceal from her the fact that my purse was getting very light; when we came back to Parma, I had only three or four hundred sequins.

The day after our return M. d'Antoine invited himself to dine with us, and, after we had drunk coffee, I left him alone with Henriette. Their interview was as long as the first, and our separation was decided. She informed me of it immediately after the departure of M. d'Antoine, and for a long time we remained folded in each other's arms, silent and blending our bitter tears.

"When shall I have to part from you, my beloved—alas! too much beloved—one?"

"Be calm, dearest; not until we reach Geneva, whither you are going to accompany me. Will you try to find me a respectable maid by to-morrow? She will accompany me from Geneva to the place where I am bound to go."

"Oh! then we shall spend a few days more together! I know no one but Dubois whom I could trust to procure a *femme de chambre*; only I do not want him to learn from her what you might not wish him to know."

"That will not be the case, for I will get another maid as soon as I am in France."

Three days afterwards Dubois, who had gladly undertaken the commission, presented to Henriette a woman already somewhat advanced in years, pretty, well dressed and respectable-looking, who, being poor, was glad of an opportunity of going back to France, her native country.

Her husband, an old military officer, had died a few months before, leaving her totally unprovided for. Henriette engaged her and told her to keep herself ready to start whenever M. Dubois should give her notice. The day before the one fixed for our departure, M. d'Antoine dined with us and, before taking leave of us, gave Henriette a sealed letter for Geneva.

We left Parma late in the evening and stopped only two hours in Turin, in order to engage a man-servant, whose services we required as far as Geneva. The next day we ascended Mont Cenis in sedan chairs and descended to the Novalaise in mountain sledges. On the fifth day we reached Geneva and put up at the Hotel des Balances. The next morning Henriette gave me a letter for the banker Tronchin, who, when he had read it, told me that he would call himself at the hotel and bring me one thousand *louis d'or*.

I came back and we sat down to dinner. We had not finished our meal when the banker was announced. He had brought the thousand *louis d'or* and told Henriette that he would give her two men whom he could recommend in every way.

She answered that she would leave Geneva as soon as she had the carriage which he was to provide for her, according to the letter I had delivered to him. He promised that everything would be ready for the following day, and he left us. It was indeed a terrible moment! Grief almost benumbed us both. We remained motionless, speechless, wrapped in the most profound despair.

I broke that sad silence to tell her that the carriage which M. Tronchin would provide could not possibly be as comfortable and as safe as mine, and I entreated her to take it, assuring her that, by accepting it, she would give a last proof of her affection.

"I will take in exchange, my dearest love, the carriage sent by the banker."

"I accept the exchange, darling," she answered. "It will be a great consolation to possess something which has belonged to you."

As she said these words, she slipped into my pocket five rolls containing each one hundred *louis d'or*—scant consolation for my heart, which was almost broken by our cruel separation! During the last twenty-four hours we could boast of no other eloquence but that which finds expression in tears, in sobs and in those hackneyed but energetic exclamations which two happy lovers are sure to address to reason when in its sternness it compels them to part from one another in the very height of their felicity. Henriette did not endeavour to lure me with any hope for the future in order to allay my sorrow! Far from that, she said to me, "Once we are parted by fate, my best and only friend, never inquire after me, and, should chance throw you in my way, do not appear to know me."

She gave me a letter for M. d'Antoine, without asking me whether I intended to go back to Parma; but, even if such had not been my intention, I should have determined at once upon returning to that city. She likewise entreated me not to leave Geneva until I had re-

ceived a letter which she promised to write to me from the first stage on her journey. She started at daybreak, having with her a maid, a footman on the box of the carriage and a courier on horseback preceding her. I followed her with my eyes as long as I could see her carriage and was still standing on the same spot long after my eyes had lost sight of it; all my thoughts were wrapped up in the beloved object I had lost forever; the world was a blank!

I went back to my room, ordered the waiter not to disturb me until the return of the horses which had drawn Henriette's carriage and lay down on my bed in the hope that sleep would for a time silence a grief which tears could not drown.

The postillion who had driven Henriette did not return till the next day; he had gone as far as Châtillon. He brought me a letter in which I found one single word: "Adieu!" He told me that they had reached Châtillon without accident and that the lady had immediately continued her journey towards Lyons. As I could not leave Geneva until the following day, I spent alone in my room some of the most melancholy hours of my life. I saw on one of the panes of glass of a window these words which she had traced with the point of a diamond I had given her, "You will forget Henriette." That prophecy was not likely to afford me any consolation. But had she attached its full meaning to the word "forget"? No; she could only mean that time would at last heal the deep wounds of my heart, and she ought not to have made it deeper by leaving behind her those words, which sounded like a reproach. No, I have not forgotten her; for even now, when my head is covered with white hair, the recollection of her is still a source of happiness for my heart! When I think that in my old age I derive happiness only from my recollections of the past, I find that my long life must have counted more bright than dark days, and, offering my thanks to God, the Giver of all, I congratulate myself and confess that life is a great blessing.

The next day I set off again for Italy with a servant recommended by M. Tronchin, and, although the season was not favourable, I took the road over Mont St. Bernard, which I crossed in three days, with seven mules carrying me, my servant, my luggage and the carriage sent by the banker to the beloved woman now forever lost to me. One of the advantages of a great sorrow is that nothing else seems painful. It is a sort of despair which is not without some sweetness. During that journey I never felt either hunger or thirst or the cold, which is so intense in that part of the Alps that the whole of nature seems to turn to ice, or the fatigue inseparable from such a difficult and dangerous journey.

I arrived in Parma in pretty good health and took up my quarters at a small inn, in the hope that in such a place I should not meet any acquaintance of mine. But I was much disappointed, for I found in that inn M. de la Haye, who had a room next to mine. Surprised at seeing me, he paid me a long compliment, trying to make me speak, but I eluded his curiosity by telling him that I was tired and that we would see each other again.

On the following day I called upon M. d'Antoine, and delivered the letter which Henriette had written to him. He opened it in my presence, and, finding another to my address enclosed in his, he handed it to me without reading it, although it was not sealed. Thinking, however, that it might have been Henriette's intention that he should read it because it was open, he asked my permission to do so, which I granted with pleasure as soon as I had myself perused it. He handed it back to me after he had read it, telling me feelingly that I could in everything rely upon him and upon his influence and credit.

Here is Henriette's letter:

"It is I, dearest and best friend, who have been compelled to abandon you; but do not let your grief be increased by any thought of my sorrow. Let us be wise enough to suppose that we have had a happy dream, and not to complain of destiny, for never did so beautiful a dream last so long! Let us be proud of the consciousness that for three months we gave one another the most perfect felicity; few human beings can boast of so much! Let us swear never to forget one another and often to remember the happy hours of our love in order to renew them in our souls, which, although divided, will enjoy them as acutely as if our hearts were beating one against the other. Do not make any enquiries about me, and, if chance should let you know who I am, forget it forever. I feel certain that you will be glad to hear that I have arranged my affairs so well that I shall, for the remainder of my life, be as happy as I can possibly be without you, dear friend, by my side. I do not know who you are, but I am certain that no one in the world knows you better than I do. I shall not have another lover as long as I live, but I do not wish you to imitate me. On the contrary, I hope that you will love again, and I trust that a good fairy will bring along your path another Henriette. Farewell... farewell."

* * * * *

I met that adorable woman fifteen years later; the reader will see where and how when we come to that period of my life.

* * * * *

I went back to my room; careless of the future, broken down by the deepest of sorrows, I locked myself in and went to bed. I felt so low in spirits that I was stunned. Life was not a burden, but only because I did not give it a thought; in fact I was in a state of complete apathy, moral and physical. Six years later I found myself in a similar predicament, but that time love was not the cause of my sorrow; it was the horrible and too famous prison of The Leads in Venice.

I was not much better either in 1768, when I was lodged in the prison of Buen Retiro in Madrid—but I must not anticipate events.

At the end of twenty-four hours, my exhaustion was very great, but I did not find the sensation disagreeable, and, in the state of mind in which I was then, I was pleased with the idea that, by increasing, that weakness would at last kill me. I was delighted to see that no one

disturbed me to offer me food, and I congratulated myself upon having dismissed my servant. Twenty-four more hours passed by, and my weakness became complete inanition.

I was in that state when De la Haye knocked at my door. I would not have answered if he had not said that someone insisted upon seeing me. I got out of bed and, scarcely able to stand, opened my door; after which I got into bed again.

"There is a stranger here," he said, "who, being in want of a carriage, offers to buy yours."

"I do not want to sell it."

"Excuse me if I have disturbed you, but you look ill."

"Yes, I wish to be left alone."

"What is the matter with you?"

Coming near my bed, he took my hand and found my pulse extremely low and weak.

"What did you eat yesterday?"

"I have eaten nothing, thank God! for two days."

Guessing the real state of things, De la Haye became anxious and entreated me to take some broth. He threw so much kindness, so much unction into his entreaties that, through weakness and weariness, I allowed myself to be persuaded. Then, without ever mentioning the name of Henriette, he treated me to a sermon upon the life to come, upon the vanity of the things of this life which we are foolish enough to prefer and upon the necessity of respecting our existence, which does not belong to us.

I was listening without answering one word, but, after all, I was listening, and De la Haye, perceiving his advantage, would not leave me and ordered dinner. I had neither the will nor the strength to resist; when the dinner was served, I ate something. Then De la Haye saw that he had conquered and for the remainder of the day devoted himself to amusing me by his cheerful conversation.

The next day the tables were turned; for it was I who invited him to keep me company and to dine with me. It seemed to me that I had not lost a particle of my sadness, but life appeared to me once more preferable to death, and, thinking that I was indebted to him for the preservation of my life, I made a great friend of him. My readers will see presently that my affection for him went very far, and they will, like me, marvel at the cause of that friendship and at the means through which it was brought about.

Three or four days afterwards Dubois, who had been informed of everything by De la Haye, called on me and persuaded me to go out. I went to the theatre, where I made the acquaintance of several Corsican officers who had served in France in the Royal Italian regiment. I also met a young man from Sicily, named Paterno, the wildest and most heedless fellow it was possible to see. He was in love with an actress who made a fool of him; he amused me with the enumeration of all her adorable qualities and all the cruelties she was practising upon him, for, although she received him at all hours, she repulsed

him harshly whenever he tried to steal the slightest favour. In the meantime, she ruined him by making him pay constantly for excellent dinners and suppers, which were eaten by her family, but which did not advance him one inch towards the fulfilment of his wishes.

He succeeded at last in exciting my curiosity. I scrutinized the actress on the stage, and, finding that she was not without beauty, I expressed a wish to know her. Paterno was delighted to introduce me to her.

I found that she was of tolerably easy virtue, and, knowing that she was very far from rolling in riches, I had no doubt that fifteen or twenty sequins would be quite sufficient to make her compliant. I communicated my thoughts to Paterno; but he laughed and told me that, if I dared make such a proposition to her, she would certainly shut her door against me. He named several officers whom she had refused to receive again because they had made similar offers. "Yet," added the young man, "I wish you would make the attempt and tell me the result candidly." I felt piqued and promised to do it.

I paid her a visit in her dressing-room at the theatre, and, as she happened during our conversation to praise the beauty of my watch, I told her that she could easily obtain possession of it, and I said at what price. She answered, according to the catechism of her profession, that an honourable man had no right to make such an offer to a respectable girl. "I offer only one ducat," said I, "to those who are not respectable." And I left her.

When I told Paterno what had occurred, he fairly jumped for joy, but I knew what to think of it all, for *così sono tutte*, and, in spite of all his entreaties, I declined to be present at his suppers, which were far from amusing and gave the family of the actress an opportunity of laughing at the poor fool who was paying for them.

Seven or eight days afterwards Paterno told me that the actress had related the affair to him exactly in the same words which I had used, and she had added that, if I had ceased my visits, it was only because I was afraid of her taking me at my word in case I should renew my proposal. I commissioned him to tell her that I would pay her another visit, not to renew my offer but to show my contempt for any proposal she might make to me herself.

The heedless fellow fulfilled his commission so well that the actress, feeling insulted, told him that she dared me to call on her. Perfectly determined to show that I despised her, I went to her dressing-room the same evening after the second act of a play in which she had not to appear again. She dismissed those who were with her, saying that she wanted to speak with me, and, after she had bolted the door, she sat down gracefully on my knees, asking me whether it was true that I despised her so much.

In such a position a man has not the courage to insult a woman, and, instead of answering, I set to work at once, without meeting even with that show of resistance which sharpens the appetite. In spite of that, dupe as I always was of a feeling truly absurd when

an intelligent man has to deal with such creatures, I gave her twenty sequins, and I confess that it was paying dearly for very smarting regrets. We both laughed at the stupidity of Paterno, who did not seem to know how such challenges generally end.

I saw the unlucky son of Sicily the next morning and told him that, having found the actress very dull, I would not see her again. Such was truly my intention, but a very important reason, which nature took care to explain to me three days afterwards, compelled me to keep my word through a much more serious motive than a simple dislike for the woman.

However, although I was deeply grieved to find myself in such a disgraceful position, I did not think I had any right to complain. On the contrary, I considered my misfortune to be a just and well deserved punishment for having abandoned myself to a Lais after I had enjoyed the felicity of possessing a woman like Henriette.

My disease was not a case within the province of empirics, and I bethought myself of confiding in M. de la Haye, who was then dining every day with me, and made no mystery of his poverty. He placed me in the hands of a skilful surgeon, who was at the same time a dentist. He recognised certain symptoms which made it a necessity to sacrifice me to the god Mercury, and that treatment, owing to the season of the year, compelled me to keep my room for six weeks. It was during the winter of 1749.

While I was thus curing myself of an ugly disease, De la Haye inoculated me with another as bad, perhaps even worse, which I should never have thought myself susceptible of catching. This Fleming, who left me for only one hour in the morning, to go—at least he said so—to church to perform his devotions, made a bigot of me! And to such an extent, that I agreed with him that I was indeed fortunate to have caught a disease which was the origin of the faith now taking possession of my soul. I would thank God fervently and with the most complete conviction for having employed Mercury to lead my mind, until then wrapped in darkness, to the pure light of holy truth! There is no doubt that such an extraordinary change in my reasoning system was the result of the exhaustion brought on by the mercury. That impure and always injurious metal had weakened my mind to such an extent that I had become almost besotted and fancied that until then my judgment had been insane. The result was that, in my newly acquired wisdom, I took the resolution of leading a totally different sort of life in future. De la Haye would often cry for joy when he saw me shedding tears caused by the contrition which he had had the wonderful cleverness to sow in my poor sickly soul. He would talk to me of Paradise and the other world just as if he had visited them in person, and I never laughed at him! He had accustomed me to renounce my reason; now, to renounce that divine faculty, a man must no longer be conscious of its value; he must have become an idiot. The reader may judge of the state to which I was reduced by the following specimen. One day De la Haye said to me, "It is not known

whether God created the world during the vernal equinox or during the autumnal one."

"Creation being granted," I replied, in spite of the mercury, "such a question is childish, for the seasons are relative and differ in the different quarters of the globe."

De la Haye reproached me with the heathenism of my ideas, told me that I must abandon such impious reasonings, and I gave way!

That man had been a Jesuit; he not only, however, refused to admit it, but he would not even suffer anyone to mention it to him. This is how he completed his work of seduction by telling me the history of his life:

"After I had been educated in a good school," he said, "and had devoted myself with some success to the arts and sciences, I was for twenty years employed at the University of Paris. Afterwards I served as an engineer in the army, and since that time I have published several works anonymously, which are now in use in every boys' school. Having given up the military service, and being poor, I undertook and completed the education of several young men, some of whom shine now in the world even more by their excellent conduct than by their talents. My last pupil was the Marquis Botta. Now being without employment, I live, as you see, trusting in God's providence. Four years ago I made the acquaintance of Baron Bavois, from Lausanne, son of the General Bavois who commanded a regiment in the service of the Duke of Modena and afterwards was unfortunate enough to make himself too conspicuous. The young baron, a Calvinist like his father, did not like the idle life he was leading at home and solicited me to undertake his education in order to fit him for a military career. Delighted at the opportunity of cultivating his fine natural disposition, I gave up everything to devote myself entirely to my task. I soon discovered that, in the question of faith, he knew himself to be in error and remained a Calvinist only out of respect to his family. When I had found out his secret feelings on that head, I had no difficulty in proving to him that his most important interests were involved in that question, as his eternal salvation was at stake. Struck by the truth of my words, he abandoned himself to my affection, and I took him to Rome, where I presented him to the Pope, Benedict XIV, who, immediately after the abjuration of my pupil, got him a lieutenancy in the army of the Duke of Modena. But the dear proselyte, who is only twenty-five years of age, cannot live upon his pay of seven sequins a month, and since his abjuration he has received nothing from his parents, who are highly incensed at what they call his apostasy. He would find himself compelled to go back to Lausanne if I did not assist him. But, alas! I am poor and without employment, so I can send him only the trifling sums which I can obtain from the few good Christians with whom I am acquainted.

"My pupil, whose heart is full of gratitude, would be very glad to know his benefactors, but they refuse to acquaint him with their names, and they are right, because charity, in order to be meritorious,

must not partake of any feeling of vanity. Thank God, I have no cause for such a feeling! I am but too happy to act as a father towards a young saint and to have had a share, as the humble instrument of the Almighty, in the salvation of his soul. That handsome and good young man trusts no one but me and writes to me regularly twice a week. I am too discreet to communicate his letters to you, but, if you were to read them, they would make you weep for sympathy. It is to him that I sent the three gold pieces which you gave me yesterday."

As he said the last words, my converter rose and went to the window to dry his tears. I felt deeply moved and full of admiration for the virtue of De la Haye and of his pupil, who, to save his soul, had placed himself under the hard necessity of accepting alms. I cried, as well as the apostle, and in my dawning piety I told him that I insisted not only on remaining unknown to his pupil but also on not knowing the amount of the sums he might take out of my purse to forward to him, and I therefore begged that he would help himself without rendering me any account. De la Haye embraced me warmly, saying that, by following the precepts of the Gospel so well, I should certainly win the Kingdom of Heaven.

The mind is sure to follow the body; it is a privilege enjoyed by matter. With an empty stomach, I became a fanatic; and the hollow made in my brain by the mercury became the home of enthusiasm. Without mentioning it to De la Haye, I wrote to my three friends, Messrs. Bragadin and Company, several letters full of pathos concerning my Tartuffe and his pupil, and I managed to communicate my fanaticism to them. You are aware, dear reader, that nothing is so catching as the plague; now fanaticism, no matter of what nature, is only the plague of the human mind.

I made my friends understand that the good of our society depended upon the admission of these two virtuous individuals; I allowed them to guess it, but, having myself become a Jesuit, I took care not to say it openly; it would of course be better if such an idea appeared to have emanated from those men, so simple and at the same time so truly virtuous. "It is God's will," I wrote to them (for deceit must always take refuge under the protection of that sacred name), "that you employ all your influence in Venice to find an honourable position for M. de la Haye and to promote the interests of young M. Bavois in his profession."

M. de Bragadin answered that De la Haye could take up his quarters with us in his palace and that Bavois was to write to his protector, the Pope, entreating His Holiness to recommend him to the ambassador of Venice, who would then forward that recommendation to the Senate, and Bavois could in that way feel sure of good employment.

The affair of the Patriarchate of Aquileia was at that time under discussion; the Republic of Venice was in possession of it as well as the Emperor of Austria, who claimed the *jus eligendi*; Pope Benedict XIV had been chosen as arbitrator, and, as he had not yet given his

decision, it was evident that the Republic would show very great deference to his recommendation.

While that important affair was enlisting all our sympathies and while they were awaiting in Venice a letter stating the effect of the Pope's recommendation, I was the hero of a comic adventure which, for the sake of my readers, must not pass unnoticed.

At the beginning of April I was entirely cured of my last misfortune; I had recovered all my usual vigour and accompanied my converter to church every day, never missing a sermon. We likewise spent the evening together at the café, where we generally met a great many officers. There was among them a Provençal who amused everybody with his boasting and with the recital of the military exploits by which he pretended to have distinguished himself in the service of several powers, principally in Spain. As he was truly a source of amusement, everybody pretended to believe him in order to keep up the game. One day as I was staring at him, he asked me whether I knew him.

"By George, sir!" I exclaimed, "know you! Why, did we not fight side by side at the battle of Arbela?"

At those words everybody burst out laughing, but the boaster, nothing daunted, said, with animation:

"Well, gentlemen, I do not see anything so very laughable in that. I was at that battle, and therefore this gentleman might very well have remarked me; in fact, I think I can recollect him."

And, continuing to speak to me, he named the regiment in which we were brother officers; of course we embraced one another, congratulating each other upon the pleasure we both felt in meeting again in Parma. After that truly comic joke I left the coffee-room in the company of my inseparable preacher.

The next morning, as I was at breakfast with De la Haye, the boasting Provençal entered my room without taking off his hat and said:

"M. d'Arbela, I have something of importance to tell you; make haste and follow me. If you are afraid, you may bring anyone you please with you. I am good for half a dozen men."

I left my chair, seized my pistols and aimed at him.

"No one," I said, with decision, "has the right to come and disturb me in my room; be off this minute or I blow your brains out."

The fellow, drawing his sword, dared me to murder him, but at the same moment De la Haye threw himself between us, stamping violently on the floor. The landlord came up and threatened the officer to send for the police if he did not withdraw immediately. He went away, saying that I had insulted him in public and that he would take care that the reparation I owed him should be as public as the insult.

When he had gone, seeing that the affair might take a tragic turn, I began to examine with De la Haye how this could be avoided, but we had not long to puzzle our imaginations for in less than half an

hour an officer of the Infante of Parma presented himself and requested me to repair immediately to headquarters, where M. de Bertolan, Commander of Parma, wanted to speak to me.

I wanted De la Haye to accompany me as a witness of what I had said in the coffee-room, as well as of what had taken place in my apartment.

I presented myself before the commander, whom I found surrounded by several officers and among them the bragging Provençal.

M. de Bertolan, who was a witty man, smiled when he saw me; then, with a very serious countenance, he said to me:

"Sir, as you have made a laughing-stock of this officer in a public place, it is but right that you should give him publicly the satisfaction which he claims, and, as commander of this city, I find myself bound in duty to ask you for that satisfaction in order to settle the affair amicably."

"Commander," I answered, "I do not see why a satisfaction should be offered to this gentleman, for it is not true that I have insulted him by turning him into ridicule. I told him that I thought I had seen him at the battle of Arbela, and I could not have any doubt about it when he said that he had been present at that battle and that he recognised me."

"Yes," interrupted the officer, "but I heard Rodela and not Arbela, and everybody knows that I fought at Rodela. But you said Arbela and certainly with the intention of laughing at me, since that battle was fought more than two thousand years ago, while the battle of Rodela in Africa took place in our time, and I was there under the orders of the Duke de Mortemar."

"In the first place, sir, you have no right to judge of my intentions, but I do not dispute your having been present at Rodela, since you say so; but in that case the tables are turned, and now I demand reparation from you if you dare discredit my having been at Arbela. I certainly did not serve under the Duke de Mortemar, because he was not there, at least to my knowledge; but I was aide-de-camp of Parmenion, and I was wounded under his eyes. If you were to ask me to show you the scar, I could not satisfy you, for you must understand that the body I had at that time does not exist any longer, and in my present bodily envelope I am only twenty-three years old."

"All this seems to me sheer madness; but, at all events, I have witnesses to prove that you were laughing at me, for you stated that you had seen me at that battle, and, by the powers! it is not possible because I was not there. At all events, I demand satisfaction."

"So do I, and we have equal rights—if mine are not even better than yours, for your witnesses are likewise mine, and these gentlemen will assert that you said that you had seen me at Rodela, and, by the powers! it is not possible, for I was not there."

"Well, I may have made a mistake."

"So may I! and therefore we have no longer any claim against one another."

The commander, who was biting his lips to restrain his mirth, said to him, "My dear sir, I do not see that you have the slightest right to demand satisfaction, since this gentleman confesses, like you, that he might have been mistaken."

"But," remarked the officer, "is it credible that he was at the battle of Arbela?"

"This gentleman leaves you free to believe or not to believe, and he is at liberty to assert that he was there until you can prove the contrary. Do you wish to deny it, to make him draw his sword?"

"God forbid! I would rather consider the affair ended."

"Well, gentlemen," said the commander, "I have but one more duty to perform, and it is to advise you to embrace one another like two honourable men."

We followed the advice with great pleasure.

The next day the Provençal, rather crestfallen, came to share my dinner, and I gave him a friendly welcome. Thus was ended that comic adventure, to the great satisfaction of M. de la Haye.

CHAPTER 27

WHILST De la Haye was every day gaining greater influence over my weakened mind and whilst I was every day devoutly attending mass, sermons and every office of the Church, I received from Venice a letter containing the pleasant information that my affair had followed its natural course, namely, that it was entirely forgotten; and in another letter M. de Bragadin informed me that the minister had written to the Venetian ambassador in Rome, with instructions to assure the Holy Father that Baron Bavois would, immediately after his arrival in Venice, receive in the army of the Republic an appointment which would enable him to live honourably and to gain a high position by his talents.

That letter overcame M. de la Haye with joy, and I completed his happiness by telling him that nothing hindered me from going back to my native city.

He immediately made up his mind to go to Modena in order to explain to his pupil how he was to act in Venice to open for himself the way to a brilliant fortune. De la Haye depended on me in every way; he saw my fanaticism and was well aware that it is a disease which rages as long as the causes from which it has sprung are in existence; as he was going with me to Venice, he flattered himself that he could easily feed the fire he had lighted. Therefore he wrote to Bavois that he would join him immediately, and two days after he took leave of me, weeping abundantly, praising highly the virtues of my soul, calling me his son, his "dear son" and assuring me that his great affection for me had been caused by the mark of election which he had seen on my countenance. After that I felt my calling and election were sure.

A few days after the departure of De la Haye I left Parma in my

carriage, with which I parted in Fusina, and from there I proceeded to Venice. After an absence of a year my three friends received me as if I had been their guardian angel. They expressed their impatience to welcome the two saints announced by my letters. An apartment was ready for De la Haye in the palace of M. de Bragadin, and, as state reasons did not allow my father to receive in his own house a foreigner who had not yet entered the service of the Republic, two rooms had been engaged for Bavois in the neighbourhood.

They were thoroughly amazed at the wonderful change which had taken place in my morals. Every day attending mass, often present at the preaching and at the other services, never showing myself at the casino, frequenting only a certain café which was the place of meeting for all men of acknowledged piety and reserve, and always studying when I was not in their company—when they compared my mode of living with the former one, they marvelled and could not sufficiently thank the eternal providence of God, whose inconceivable ways they admired. They blessed the criminal actions which had compelled me to remain one year away from my native place. I crowned their delight by paying all my debts without asking any money from M. de Bragadin, who, not having given me anything for one year, had religiously put aside every month the sum he had allowed me. I need not say how pleased the worthy friends were when they saw that I had entirely given up gambling.

I had a letter from De la Haye in the beginning of May. He announced that he was on the eve of starting with the son so dear to his heart, and that he would soon place himself at the disposition of the respectable men to whom I had announced him.

Knowing the hour at which the barge arrived from Modena, we all went to meet them except M. de Bragadin, who was engaged at the Senate. We returned to the palace before him, and, when he came back, finding us all together, he gave his new guests the friendliest welcome. De la Haye spoke to me of a hundred things, but I scarcely heard what he said, so much was my attention taken up by Bavois. He was so different to what I had fancied him to be from the impression I had received from De la Haye that my ideas were altogether upset. I had to study him for three days before I could make up my mind to like him. I must give his portrait to my readers.

Baron Bavois was a young man of about twenty-five, of middle size, handsome in features, well made, fair, of an equable temper, speaking well and with intelligence and uttering his words with a tone of modesty which suited him exactly. His features were regular and pleasing, his teeth were beautiful, his hair was long and fine, always well taken care of and exhaling the perfume of the pomatum with which it was dressed. That individual, who was the exact opposite of the man that De la Haye had led me to imagine, surprised my friends greatly, but their welcome did not in any way betray their astonishment, for their pure and candid minds would not admit a judgment contrary to the good opinion they had formed of his morals.

As soon as we had established De la Haye in his beautiful apartment, I accompanied Bavois to the rooms engaged for him, where his luggage had been sent by my orders. He found himself in very comfortable quarters, and, being received with distinction by his worthy host, who was already greatly prejudiced in his favour, the young baron embraced me warmly, pouring out all his gratitude and assuring me that he felt deeply all I had done for him without knowing him, as De la Haye had informed him of all that had occurred. I pretended not to understand what he was alluding to and, to change the subject of conversation, asked him how he intended to occupy his time in Venice until his military appointment gave him serious duties to perform.

"I trust," he answered, "that we shall enjoy ourselves in an agreeable way, for I have no doubt that our inclinations are the same."

Mercury and De la Haye had so completely besotted me that I should have found some difficulty in understanding these words, however intelligible they were; but, if I did not go any further than the outward signification of his answer, I could not help remarking that he had already taken the fancy of the two daughters of the house. They were neither pretty nor ugly, but he showed himself gracious towards them, like a man who understands his business. I had, however, already made such great progress in my mystical education that I considered the compliments he addressed to the girls as mere forms of politeness.

For the first day I took my young baron only to Saint Mark's Square and to the café, where we remained until supper-time, as it had been arranged that he would take his meals with us. At the supper-table he showed himself very witty, and M. Dandolo named an hour for the next day when he intended to present him to the Secretary of War. In the evening I accompanied him to his lodging, where I found that the two young girls were delighted because the young Swiss nobleman had no servant and because they hoped to convince him that he would not require one.

The next day, a little earlier than the time appointed, I called upon him with M. Dandolo and M. Barbaro, who were both to present him at the War Office. We found him at his toilette under the delicate hands of the eldest girl, who was dressing his hair. His room was fragrant with the perfumes of his pomatums and scents. This did not indicate a sainted man, yet my two friends did not feel scandalised, although their astonishment was very evident, for they had not expected that show of gallantry from a young neophyte. I was nearly bursting into a loud laugh, when I heard M. Dandolo remark that, unless we hurried, we would not have time to hear mass, whereupon Bavois inquired whether it was some special holy day. M. Dandolo, without passing any remark, answered negatively, and after that mass was not again mentioned. When Bavois was ready, I left them and went a different way. I met them again at dinner-time, during which the reception given to the young baron by the Secretary was discussed, and in the evening my friends introduced him to several ladies, who were much pleased with him. In less than a week he was so well known that there was no fear

of his time hanging wearily on his hands, but that week was likewise enough to give me a perfect insight into his nature and way of thinking. I should not have required such a long study if I had not at first begun on a wrong scent—or, rather, if my intelligence had not been stultified by my fanaticism. Bavois was particularly fond of women, of gambling, of every luxury, and, as he was poor, women supplied him with the best part of his resources. As to religious faith, he had none, and, as he was no hypocrite, he confessed as much to me.

"How have you contrived," I said to him one day, "such as you are, to deceive De la Haye?"

"God forbid I should deceive anyone. De la Haye is perfectly well aware of my system and of my way of thinking on religious matters; but, being himself very devout, he entertains a holy sympathy for my soul, and I do not object to it. He has bestowed many kindnesses upon me, and I feel grateful to him; my affection for him is all the greater because he never teases me with his dogmatic lessons or with sermons respecting my salvation, of which I have no doubt that God, in His fatherly goodness, will take care. All this is settled between De la Haye and me, and we live on the best of terms."

The best part of the joke is that, while I was studying him, Bavois, without knowing it, restored my mind to its original state, and I was ashamed of myself when I realised that I had been the dupe of a Jesuit who was an arrant hypocrite, in spite of the character of holiness which he assumed and which he could play with such marvellous ability. From that moment I fell again into all my former practices. But let us return to De la Haye.

That late Jesuit, who in his inmost heart loved nothing but his own comfort, already advanced in years and therefore no longer caring for the fair sex, was exactly the sort of man to please my simple-minded trio of friends. As he never spoke to them but of God, of His angels, and of everlasting glory and as he was always accompanying them to church, they found him a delightful companion. They longed for the time when he would disclose himself, for they imagined he was at the very least a Rosicrucian or perhaps the hermit of Courpegna, who had taught me the cabalistic science and made me a present of the immortal *Paralis*. They felt grieved because the oracle had forbidden them, through my cabalistic lips, ever to mention my science in the presence of Tartuffe.

As I had foreseen, that interdiction left me to enjoy as I pleased all the time that I would have been called upon to devote to their devout credulity, and besides, I was naturally afraid lest De la Haye, such as I truly believed him to be, would never lend himself to that trifling nonsense and would, for the sake of deserving greater favour at their hands, endeavour to undeceive them and take my place in their confidence.

I soon found out that I had acted with prudence, for in less than three weeks the cunning fox had obtained so great an influence over the mind of my three friends that he was foolish enough, not only to believe that he did not need me any more to support his credit with them, but

even that he could supplant me whenever he chose. I could see it clearly in his way of addressing me, as well as in the change in his proceedings.

He was beginning to hold with my friends frequent conversations to which I was not summoned, and he had contrived to make them introduce him to several families which I was not in the habit of visiting. He assumed his grand Jesuitic airs, and, although with honeyed words, he would take the liberty of censuring me because I sometimes spent a night out, and, as he would say, "God knows where!"

I was particularly vexed at his seeming to accuse me of leading his pupil astray. He then would assume the tone of a man speaking jestingly, but I was not deceived. I thought it was time to put an end to his game, and with that intention I paid him a visit in his bedroom. When I was seated, I said, "I come, as a true worshipper of the Gospel, to tell you in private something that, another time, I would say in public."

"What is it, my dear friend?"

"I advise you in future not to hurl at me the slightest taunt respecting the life I am leading with Bavois when we are in the presence of my three worthy friends. I do not object to listening to you when we are alone."

"You are wrong in taking my innocent jests seriously."

"Wrong or right, that does not matter. Why do you never attack your proselyte? Be careful hereafter, or I might on my side, and only in jest like you, throw at your head some repartee which you have every reason to fear, and thus repay you with interest."

And, bowing to him, I left his room.

A few days afterwards I spent a few hours with my friends and *Paralis*, and the oracle enjoined them never to accomplish without my advice anything that might be recommended or even insinuated by Valentine; that was the cabalistic name of the disciple of Escobar. I knew I could rely upon their obedience to that order.

De la Haye soon took notice of some slight change; he became more reserved, and Bavois, whom I informed of what I had done, gave me his full approbation. He felt convinced, as I was, that De la Haye had been useful to him only through weak or selfish reasons, that is, that he would have cared little for his soul if his face had not been handsome and if he had not known that he would derive important advantages from having caused his so-called conversion.

Finding that the Venetian government was postponing his appointment from day to day, Bavois entered the service of the French ambassador. That decision made it necessary for him not only to cease his visits to M. de Bragadin, but even to give up his intercourse with De la Haye, who was the guest of that senator.

It is one of the strictest laws of the Republic that the patricians and their families shall not hold any intercourse with the foreign ambassadors and their suites. But the decision taken by Bavois did not prevent my friends speaking in his favour, and they succeeded in obtaining employment for him, as will be seen further on.

The husband of Christine, whom I never visited, invited me to go to

the casino which he was in the habit of frequenting with his aunt and his wife, who had already presented him with a token of their mutual affection. I accepted his invitation and found Christine as lovely as ever and speaking the Venetian dialect like her husband. I made in that casino the acquaintance of a chemist, who inspired me with the wish to follow a course of chemistry. I went to his house, where I found a young girl who greatly pleased me. She was a neighbour and came every evening to keep the chemist's elderly wife company, and at a regular hour a servant called to take her home. I had never made love to her but once in a trifling sort of way and in the presence of the old lady; but I was surprised not to see her after that for several days, and I expressed my astonishment. The good lady told me that very likely the girl's cousin, an abbé, with whom she was residing, had heard of my seeing her every evening, had become jealous and would not allow her to come again.

"An abbé jealous?"

"Why not? He never allows her to go out except on Sundays to attend the first mass at the Church of Santa Maria Mater Domini, close by his dwelling. He did not object to her coming here because he knew that we never had any visitors, and very likely he has heard through the servant of your being here every evening."

A great enemy to all jealous persons and a greater friend to my amorous fancies, I wrote to the young girl that, if she would leave her cousin for me, I would give her a house in which she should be the mistress and would surround her with good society and every luxury to be found in Venice. I added that I would be in the church on the following Sunday to receive her answer.

I did not forget my appointment, and her answer was that, the abbé being her tyrant, she would consider herself happy to escape out of his clutches, but that she could not make up her mind to follow me unless I consented to marry her. She concluded her letter by saying that, in case I entertained honest intentions towards her, I had only to speak to her mother, Jeanne Marchetti, who resided in Lusina, a city thirty miles distant from Venice.

This letter piqued my curiosity, and I even imagined that she had written it in concert with the abbé. Thinking that they wanted to dupe me and, besides, finding the proposal of marriage ridiculous, I determined on having my revenge. But I wanted to get to the bottom of it, and I made up my mind to see the girl's mother. She felt honoured by my visit and greatly pleased when, after I had shown her her daughter's letter, I told her that I wished to marry her, but that I should never think of it as long as she resided with the abbé.

"That abbé," she said, "is a distant relative. He used to live alone in his house in Venice, and two years ago he told me that he was in want of a housekeeper. He asked me to let my daughter go to him in that capacity, assuring me that in Venice she would have good opportunities of getting married. He offered to give me a deed in writing stating that on the day of her marriage he would give her all his furniture valued at

about one thousand ducats and the inheritance of a small estate, bringing one hundred ducats a year, which he possesses here. It seemed to me a good bargain, and, my daughter being pleased with the offer, I accepted. He gave me the deed duly drawn by a notary, and my daughter went with him. I know that he makes a regular slave of her, but she chose to go. Nevertheless, I need not tell you that my most ardent wish is to see her married, for, as long as a girl is without a husband, she is too much exposed to temptation, and the poor mother cannot rest in peace."

"Then come to Venice with me. You will take your daughter out of the abbé's house, and I will make her my wife. Unless that is done, I cannot marry her, for I should dishonour myself if I received my wife from his hands."

"Oh, no! for he is my cousin, although only in the fourth degree; and, what is more, he is a priest and says mass every day."

"You make me laugh, my good woman. Everybody knows that a priest says mass without depriving himself of certain trifling enjoyments. Take your daughter with you or give up all hope of ever seeing her married."

"But, if I take her with me, he will not give her his furniture, and perhaps he will sell his small estate here."

"I undertake to look to that part of the business. I promise to take her out of his hands and make her come back to you with all the furniture, and to obtain the estate when she is my wife. If you knew me better, you would not doubt what I say. Come to Venice, and I assure you that you shall return here in four or five days with your daughter."

She read again the letter which had been written to me by her daughter and told me that, being a poor widow, she had not the money necessary to pay the expenses of her journey to Venice or her return to Lusitania.

"In Venice you shall not want for anything," I said. "In the meantime, here are ten sequins."

"Ten sequins! Then I can go there with my sister-in-law?"

"Come with anyone you like; but let us go soon, so as to reach Chiozza, where we must sleep. To-morrow we shall dine in Venice, and I undertake to defray all expenses."

We arrived in Venice the next day at ten o'clock, and I took the two women to Castello, to a house the first floor of which was empty. I left them there and, provided with the deed signed by the abbé, went to dine with my three friends, to whom I said that I had been to Chiozza on important business. After dinner I called upon the lawyer, Marco de Lesse, who told me that, if the mother presented a petition to the President of the Council of Ten, she would immediately be invested with power to take her daughter away, with all the furniture in the house, which she could send wherever she pleased. I instructed him to have the petition ready, saying that I would come the next morning with the mother, who would sign it in his presence.

I brought the mother early in the morning, and, after she had

signed the petition, we went to the Boussole, where she presented it to the President of the Council. In less than a quarter of an hour a bailiff was ordered to repair to the house of the priest with the mother and put her in possession of her daughter and of all the furniture, which she could immediately take away.

The order was carried into execution to the very letter. I was with the mother in a gondola as near as possible to the house, and I had provided a large boat in which the *shirri* stowed all the furniture found on the premises. When it was all done, the daughter was brought to the gondola and was extremely surprised to see me. Her mother kissed her and told her that I would be her husband the very next day. She answered that she was delighted and that nothing had been left in her tyrant's house except his bed and his clothes.

When we reached Castello, I ordered the furniture to be brought out of the boat; we had dinner, and I told the three women that they must go back to Lusìa, where I would join them as soon as I had settled all my affairs. I spent the afternoon gaily with my intended. She told us that the abbé was dressing when the bailiff presented the order of the Council of Ten, with injunctions to allow its free execution under penalty of death; that the abbé finished his toilette, went out to say his mass, and that everything had been done without the slightest opposition. "I was told," she added, "that my mother was waiting for me in the gondola, but I did not expect to find you, and I never suspected that you were at the bottom of the whole affair."

"It is the first proof I give you of my love."

These words made her smile very pleasantly.

I took care to have a good supper and some excellent wines, and, after we had spent two hours at table in the midst of the joys of Bacchus, I devoted four more to a pleasant *tête-à-tête* with my intended bride.

The next morning, after breakfast, I had the whole of the furniture stowed in a peotta, which I had engaged for that purpose and paid for beforehand; I gave ten more sequins to the mother and sent them away all three in great delight. The affair was completed to my honour as well as to my entire satisfaction, and I returned home.

The case had made so much noise that my friends could not have remained ignorant of it; the consequence was that, when they saw me, they showed their surprise and sorrow. De la Haye embraced me with an air of profound grief, but it was a feigned feeling, a harlequin's dress, which he had the talent of assuming with the greatest facility. M. de Bragadin alone laughed heartily, saying to the others that they did not understand the affair and that it was the forerunner of something great which was known only to heavenly spirits. On my side, being ignorant of the opinion they entertained of the matter and certain that they were not informed of all the circumstances, I laughed like M. de Bragadin, but said nothing. I had nothing to fear, and I wanted to amuse myself with all that would

he said. We sat down to table, and M. Barbaro was the first to tell me in a friendly manner that he hoped at least that this was not the day after my wedding.

"Then people say that I am married?"

"It is being said everywhere and by everybody. The members of the Council themselves believe it, and they have good reason to believe that they are right."

"To be right in believing such a thing, they ought to be certain of it, and those gentlemen have no such certainty. As they are not infallible any more than anyone, except God, I tell you that they are mistaken. I like to perform good actions and to get pleasure for my money, but not at the expense of my liberty. Whenever you want to know my affairs, recollect that you can receive information about them only from me, and public rumour is good only to amuse fools."

"But," said M. Dandolo, "you spent the night with the person who is represented as your wife?"

"Quite true; but I have no account to give to anyone respecting what I did last night. Are you not of my opinion, M. de la Haye?"

"I wish you would not ask my opinion, for I do not know. But I must say that public rumour ought not to be despised. The deep affection I have for you causes me to grieve for what the public voice says about you."

"How is it that those reports do not grieve M. de Bragadin, who has certainly greater affection for me than you have?"

"I respect you, but I have learned at my own expense that slander is to be feared. It is said that, in order to get hold of a young girl who was residing with her uncle, a worthy priest, you suborned a woman, who declared herself to be the girl's mother and thus deceived the Supreme Council, through the authority of which she obtained possession of the girl for you. The bailiff sent by the Council swears that you were in the gondola with the false mother when the young girl joined her. It is said that the deed in virtue of which you caused the worthy ecclesiastic's furniture to be carried off is false, and you are blamed for having made the highest body of the State a stepping-stone to crime. In fine, it is said that, even if you have married the girl—and no doubt of this is entertained—the members of the Council will not be silent as to the fraudulent means you have had recourse to in order to carry out your intentions successfully."

"That is a very long speech," I said to him, coldly, "but learn from me that a wise man who has heard a criminal accusation related with so many absurd particulars ceases to be wise when he makes himself the echo of what he has heard; for, if the accusation should turn out to be a calumny, he would himself become the accomplice of the slanderer."

After that sentence, which brought the blood to the face of the Jesuit, but which my friends thought very wise, I entreated him, in a meaning voice, to spare his anxiety about me and to be quite certain that I knew the laws of honour and that I had judgment enough to

take care of myself, and to let foul tongues say what they liked about me, just as I did when I heard them speak ill of him. The adventure was the talk of the city for five or six days, after which it was soon forgotten.

But, three months having elapsed without my having paid any visit to Lusía or having answered the letters written to me by the *damigella* Marchetti and without sending her the money she claimed of me, she made up her mind to take certain proceedings which might have had serious consequences, although they had none whatever in the end.

One day Ignacio, the bailiff of the dreaded tribunal of the State Inquisitors, presented himself as I was sitting at table with my friends, De la Haye and two other guests. He informed me that the *cavaliere* Cantarini dal Zoffo wished to see me and would wait for me the next morning at such an hour at the Madonna del Orto. I rose from the table and answered, with a bow, that I would not fail to obey the wishes of his excellency. The bailiff then left us.

I could not possibly guess what such a high dignitary of State could want with my humble person, yet the message made us rather anxious, for Cantarini dal Zoffo was one of the Inquisitors, that is to say, a bird of very ill omen. M. de Bragadin, who had been Inquisitor while he was Councillor and therefore knew the habits of the tribunal, told me that I had nothing to fear.

"Ignacio was dressed in private clothes," he added, "and therefore he did not come as the official messenger of the dread tribunal. M. Cantarini wishes to speak to you only as a private citizen, as he sends you word to call at his palace and not at the court-house. He is an elderly man, strict but just, to whom you must speak frankly and without equivocating, otherwise you would make matters worse."

I was pleased with M. de Bragadin's advice, which was of great use to me. I called at the appointed time.

I was immediately announced and had not long to wait. I entered the room, and His Excellency, seated at a table, examined me from head to foot for one minute without speaking to me; he then rang the bell and ordered his servant to introduce the two ladies who were waiting in the next room. I guessed at once what was the matter and felt no surprise when I saw the Marchetti woman and her daughter. His Excellency asked me if I knew them.

"I must know them, monsignor, as one of them will become my wife when she has convinced me by her good conduct that she is worthy of that honour."

"Her conduct is good, she lives with her mother at Lusía; you have deceived her. Why do you postpone your marriage with her? Why do you not visit her? You never answer her letters, and you let her be in want."

"I cannot marry her, Your Excellency, before I have enough to support her. That will come in three or four years, thanks to a situation which M. de Bragadin, my only protector, promises to obtain

for me. Until then she must live honourably and support herself by working. I will marry her only when I am convinced of her virtuous character, and particularly when I am certain that she has given up all intercourse with the abbé, her cousin in the fourth degree. I do not visit her because my confessor and my conscience forbid me to go to her house."

"She wishes you to give her a legal promise of marriage and that you support her."

"Monsignor, I am under no obligation to give her a promise of marriage, and, having no means whatever, I cannot support her. She must earn her own living with her mother."

"When she lived with her cousin," said her mother, "she never lacked anything, and she shall go back to him."

"If she returns to his house, I shall not take the trouble of taking her out of his hands a second time, and Your Excellency will then see that I was right to defer my marriage with her until I was convinced of her good character."

The judge told me that my presence was no longer necessary. That was the end of the affair, and I never heard any more about it. The recital of the dialogue greatly amused my friends.

At the beginning of the Carnival of 1750 I won a prize of three thousand ducats at the lottery. Fortune made me that present when I did not require it, for I had held the bank during the autumn and had won. It was at a casino where no nobleman dared to present himself because one of the partners was an officer in the service of the Duke de Montalégre, the Spanish ambassador. The citizens of Venice felt ill at ease with the patricians; and that is always the case under an aristocratic government because equality exists in reality only between the members of such a government.

As I intended to take a trip to Paris, I placed one thousand sequins in M. de Bragadin's hands, and with that project in view I had the strength of will to pass the carnival without risking my money at the faro table. I had taken a share of one-fourth in the bank of an honest patrician, and early in Lent he handed me a large sum.

Towards mid-Lent my friend Baletti returned from Mantua to Venice. He was engaged at the St. Moses Theatre as ballet-master during the Fair of the Ascension. He was with Marina, but they did not live together. She made the conquest of an English Jew, called Mendez, who spent a great deal of money for her. That Jew gave me good news of Thérèse, whom he had known in Naples and in whose hands he had left some of his spoils. The information pleased me, and I was very glad to have been prevented by Henriette from joining Thérèse in Naples, as I had intended, for I should certainly have fallen in love with her again and God knows what the consequence might have been.

It was at that time that Bavois was appointed captain in the service of the Republic; he rose rapidly in his profession, as I shall mention hereafter.

De la Haye undertook the education of a young nobleman called Felix Calvi and a short time afterwards accompanied him to Poland. I met him again in Vienna three years later.

I was making my preparations to go to the fair at Reggio, then to Turin, where the whole of Italy was congregating for the marriage of the Duke of Savoy with a princess of Spain, daughter of Philip V, and lastly to Paris, where, Madame la Dauphine being pregnant, magnificent preparations were being made in the expectation of the birth of a prince. Baletti was likewise on the point of undertaking the same journey. He was recalled by his parents, who were dramatic artists; his mother was the celebrated Silvia.

Baletti was engaged at the Italian Theatre in Paris as dancer and first gentleman. I could not choose a companion more to my taste, more agreeable or in a better position to procure me numerous advantageous acquaintances in Paris.

I bade farewell to my three excellent friends, promising to return within two years.

I left my brother François in the studio of Simonetti, the painter of battle pieces, known as The Parmesan. I gave him a promise to think of him in Paris, where, at that time particularly, great talent was always certain of a high fortune. My readers will see how I kept my word.

I likewise left in Venice my brother Jean, who had returned to that city after having travelled through Italy with Guarienti. He was on the point of going to Rome, where he remained fourteen years in the studio of Raphael Mengs. He left Rome for Dresden in 1764, where he died in the year 1795.

Baletti started before me, and I left Venice, to meet him in Reggio, on the 1st of June, 1750. I was well fitted out, well supplied with money and sure not to want for any if I led a proper life. We shall soon see, dear reader, what judgment you will pass on my conduct; or rather, I shall not see it, for I know that, by the time you are able to judge, I shall no longer care for your sentence.

CHAPTER 28

PRECISELY at twelve o'clock the peotta landed me at Ponte di Lago Oscuro, and I immediately took a post-chaise to reach Ferrara in time for dinner. I put up at St. Mark's Hotel. I was following the waiter up the stairs when a joyful uproar, which suddenly burst from a room the door of which was open, made me curious to ascertain the cause of so much mirth. I peeped into the room and saw some twelve persons, men and women, seated around a well supplied table. It was a very natural thing, and I was moving on when I was stopped by the exclamation, "Ah, here he is!" uttered by the pretty voice of a woman; and at the same moment the speaker, leaving the table, came to me with open arms and embraced me, saying:

"Quick, quick, a seat for him near me! Take his luggage to his room."

A young man came up, and she said to him, "Well, I told you he would arrive to-day!"

She made me sit near her at the table after I had been saluted by all the guests, who had risen to do me honour.

"My dear cousin," she said, addressing me, "you must be hungry." And, as she spoke, she squeezed my foot under the table. "Here is my intended husband, whom I beg to introduce to you, as well as my father-in-law and mother-in-law. The other guests around the table are friends of the family. But, my dear cousin, tell me why my mother did not come with you?"

At last I had to open my lips!

"Your mother, my dear cousin, will be here in three or four days at the latest."

I thought that my newly found cousin was unknown to me, but, when I looked at her with more attention, I fancied I recollected her features. She was La Catinella, a dancer of reputation, but I had never spoken to her before. I easily guessed that she was giving me an *impromptu* part in a play of her own composition, and I was to be a *deus ex machina*. Whatever is singular and unexpected has always attracted me, and, as my cousin was pretty, I lent myself most willingly to the joke, entertaining no doubt that she would reward me in an agreeable manner. All I had to do was to play my part well, but without implicating myself. Therefore, pretending to be very hungry, I gave her the opportunity of speaking and of informing me by hints of what I had to know in order not to make blunders. Understanding the reason of my reserve, she afforded me the proof of her quick intelligence by saying, sometimes to one person, sometimes to another, everything it was necessary for me to know. Thus I learnt that the wedding could not take place until the arrival of her mother, who was to bring the wardrobe and my "cousin's" diamonds. I was the precentor going to Turin to compose the music of the opera which was to be represented at the marriage of the Duke of Savoy. This last discovery pleased me greatly because I saw that I should have no difficulty in taking my departure the next morning, and I began to enjoy the part I had to play. Yet, if I had not reckoned upon the reward, I might very well have informed the honourable company that my false cousin was mad; but, although Catinella was very near thirty, she was very pretty and celebrated for her intrigues; that was enough, and she could turn me round her little finger.

The future mother-in-law was seated opposite, and, to do me honour, she filled a glass and offered it to me. Already identified with my part in the comedy, I put forth my hand to take the glass, but, seeing that my hand was somewhat bent, she said to me, "What is the matter with your hand, sir?"

"Nothing serious, madame; only a slight sprain which a little rest will soon cure."

At these words Catinella, laughing heartily, said that she regretted the accident because it would deprive her friends of the pleasure they would have enjoyed in hearing me play the harpsichord.

"I am glad to find it a laughing matter, cousin."

"I laugh because it reminds me of a sprained ankle which I once feigned to have in order not to dance."

After coffee the mother-in-law, who evidently understood what was proper, said that most likely my cousin wanted to talk with me on family matters and that we ought to be left alone.

Every one of the guests left the room.

As soon as I was alone with her in my room, which was next to her own, she threw herself on a sofa and gave way to a most immoderate fit of laughter.

"Although I know you only by name," she said to me, "I have entire confidence in you, but you will do well to go away to-morrow. I have been here for two months without any money. I have nothing but a few dresses and some linen, which I should have been compelled to sell to defray my expenses if I had not been lucky enough to inspire the landlord's son with the deepest love. I have flattered his passion by promising to become his wife and to bring him as a marriage portion twenty thousand crowns' worth of diamonds, which I am supposed to have in Venice and which my mother is expected to bring with her. But my mother has nothing and knows nothing of the affair, therefore she is not likely to leave Venice."

"But tell me, lovely madcap, what will be the end of this extravaganza? I am afraid it will take a tragic turn at the last."

"You are mistaken; it will remain a comedy, and a very amusing one, too. I am expecting every hour the arrival of Count Holstein, brother of the Elector of Mainz. He has written to me from Frankfort; he has left that city and must by this time have reached Venice. He will take me to the fair at Reggio, and, if my intended takes it into his head to be angry, the count will thrash him and pay my bill, but I am determined that he shall be neither thrashed nor paid. As I go away, I have only to whisper in his ear that I will certainly return, and it will be all right; I know my promise to become his wife as soon as I come back will make him happy."

"That's all very well. You are as witty as a cousin of Satan, but I shall not wait your return to marry you; our wedding must take place at once."

"What madness! At least wait until this evening."

"Not a bit of it, for I can almost fancy I hear the count's carriage. If he should not arrive, we can continue the sport during the night."

"So you love me?"

"To distraction! but what does it matter? However, your excellent comedy renders you worthy of adoration. Now, suppose we do not waste our time?"

"You are right: it is an episode, and all the more agreeable for being impromptu."

I can well recollect that I found it a delightful episode. Towards evening all the family joined us again, a walk was proposed, and we were on the point of going out when a carriage drawn by six post-horses noisily entered the yard. Catinella looked through the window and desired to be left alone, saying that it was a prince who had come to see her. Everybody went away, she pushed me into my room and locked me in. I went to the window and saw a nobleman four times as big as myself getting out of the carriage. He came upstairs, entered the room of the intended bride, and all that was left to me was the consolation of having seized fortune by the forelock, the pleasure of hearing their conversation and a convenient view, through a crevice in the partition, of what Catinella contrived to do with that heavy lump of flesh. But at last the stupid amusement wearied me, for it lasted five hours, which were employed in amorous caresses, in packing Catinella's rags, loading them on the carriage, taking supper and drinking numerous bumpers of Rhenish wine. At midnight the count left the hotel, carrying away with him the beloved mistress of the landlord's son.

No one during those long hours had come to my room, and I had not called. I was afraid of being discovered and did not know how far the German prince would be pleased if he found out that he had had an indiscreet witness of the heavy and impotent demonstrations of his tenderness, which were a credit to neither of the actors and which supplied me with ample food for thought upon the miseries of mankind.

After the departure of the heroine, catching through the crevice a glimpse of the abandoned lover, I called out to him to unlock my door. The poor fellow told me piteously that, Catinella having taken the key with her, it would be necessary to break the door open. I begged him to have it done at once because I was hungry. As soon as I was out of my prison, I had my supper, and the unfortunate lover kept me company. He told me that Catinella had found a moment to promise him that she would return within six weeks, that she was shedding tears in giving him that assurance and had kissed him with great tenderness.

"Did the prince pay her expenses?"

"Not at all. We would not have allowed him to do it, even if he had offered. My future wife would have felt offended, for you can have no idea of the delicacy of her feelings."

"What does your father say of her departure?"

"My father always sees the worst side of everything; he says that she will never come back, and my mother shares his opinion rather than mine. But you, *signor maestro*, what do you think?"

"That, if she promised to return, she will be sure to keep her word."

"Of course! for, if she did not mean to come back, she would not have given me her promise."

"Precisely; I call that a good argument."

I had for my supper what was left of the meal prepared by the count's cook, and I drank a bottle of excellent Rhenish wine which Catinella had juggled away to treat her intended husband and which

the worthy fellow thought could not have a better destination than to treat his future cousin. After supper I took post-horses and continued my journey, assuring the unhappy, forlorn lover that I would do all I could to persuade my cousin to come back very soon. I wanted to pay my bill, but he refused to receive any money. I reached Bologna a few minutes after Catinella and put up at the same hotel, where I found an opportunity of telling her all her lover had said. I arrived in Reggio before her, but could not speak to her in that city, for she was always in the company of her potent and impotent lord. After the fair, during which nothing of importance occurred to me, I left Reggio with my friend Baletti, and we proceeded to Turin, which I wanted to see, for the first time I had gone to that city with Henriette I had stopped only long enough to change horses.

I found everything beautiful in Turin, the city, the court, the theatre, and the women, including the Duchess of Savoy; but I could not help laughing when I was told that the police of the city was very efficient, for the streets were full of beggars. That police, however, was the special care of the King, who was very intelligent, if we are to believe history, but I confess that I laughed when I saw the ridiculous face of that sovereign.

I had never seen a king before in my life, and a foolish idea made me suppose that a king must be pre-eminent—a very rare being—by his beauty and the majesty of his appearance, and in everything superior to the rest of them. For a young republican endowed with reason, my idea was not, after all, so very foolish; but I very soon got rid of it when I saw the King of Sardinia, ugly, humpbacked, morose and vulgar even in his manners; I then realised that it was possible to be a king without being entirely a man.

I saw L'Astrua and Gafarello, those two magnificent singers, on the stage and admired the dancing of La Geoffroi, who married at that time a worthy dancer named Bodin.

During my stay in Turin no amorous fancy disturbed the peace of my soul except an accident which happened to me with the daughter of my washerwoman and which increased my knowledge of physics in a singular manner. That girl was very pretty, and, without being what might be called in love with her, I wished to obtain her favours. Piqued at my not being able to obtain an appointment from her, I contrived one day to catch her at the bottom of a back staircase by which she used to come to my room, and, I must confess, with the intention of using a little violence if necessary.

Having concealed myself for that purpose at the time I expected her, I got hold of her by surprise, and, half by persuasion, half by the rapidity of my attack, she was brought to a right position, but a loud explosion somewhat cooled my ardour, the more so that the young girl covered her face with her hands as if she wished to hide her shame. This extraordinary phenomenon, the poor girl's embarrassment, our position—everything, in fact, struck me as so comical that I burst into the most immoderate laughter, which compelled me to give up the

undertaking. Ashamed and confused, the young girl ran away, and I did nothing to hinder her. After that she never had the courage to present herself before me. I remained seated on the stairs for a quarter of an hour after she had left me, amused at the funny character of a scene which even now excites my mirth. I suppose that the young girl was indebted for her virtue to that singular disease, and most likely, if it were common to all the fair sex, there would be fewer gallant women.

Baletti, being in a hurry to reach Paris, where great preparations were being made for the birth of a Duke of Burgundy—for the duchess was near the time of her delivery—easily persuaded me to shorten my stay in Turin. We therefore left that city and in five days arrived at Lyons, where I stayed about a week.

Lyons is a very fine city, in which at that time there were scarcely three or four noble houses opened to strangers; but, in compensation, there were more than a hundred hospitable ones belonging to merchants, manufacturers and commission agents, amongst whom was to be found an excellent society remarkable for easy manners, politeness, frankness and good style, without the absurd pride to be met with amongst the nobility in the provinces, with very few honourable exceptions. It is true that the standard of good manners is below that of Paris, but one soon gets accustomed to it. The wealth of Lyons arises from good taste and low prices, and Fashion is the goddess to whom that city owes its prosperity. Fashion alters every year, and such stuffs as the fashion of the day gives a value equal, say, to thirty, is the next year reduced to fifteen or twenty, and then it is sent to foreign countries, where it is sought after as a novelty.

The manufacturers of Lyons give high salaries to designers of talent; in that lies the secret of their success. Low prices come from Competition, a fruitful source of wealth and a daughter of Liberty. Therefore a government wishing to establish on a firm basis the prosperity of trade must give commerce full liberty, only being careful to prevent the frauds which private interests, often wrongly understood, might invent at the expence of public and general interests. In fact, the government must hold the scales and allow the citizens to load them as they please.

In Lyons I met the most famous courtesan of Venice. It was generally admitted that her equal had never been seen. Her name was Ancilla. Every man who saw her coveted her, and she was so kindly disposed that she could not refuse her favours to anyone; for, if all men loved her one after the other, she returned the compliment by loving them all at once and, with her, pecuniary advantages were only a very secondary consideration.

Venice has always been blessed with courtesans more celebrated for their beauty than their wit. Those who were most famous in my younger days were Ancilla and another called Spina, both the daughters of gondoliers and both killed very young by the excesses of a profession which in their eyes was a noble one. At the age of twenty-two Ancilla turned dancer and Spina became a singer. Campioni, a celebrated Venetian

dancer, imparted to the lovely Ancilla all the graces and talents of which her physical perfections were susceptible, and married her. Spina had for her master a *castrato* who succeeded in making of her only a very ordinary singer, and in the absence of talent she was compelled, in order to get a living, to make the most of the beauty she had received from nature.

I shall have occasion to speak again of Ancilla before her death. She was then in Lyons with her husband; they had just returned from England, where they had been greatly applauded at the Haymarket Theatre. She had stopped in Lyons only for her pleasure, and, the moment she showed herself, she had at her feet the most brilliant young men of the town, who were the slaves of her slightest caprice. Every day parties of pleasure, every evening magnificent suppers and every night a great faro bank. The banker at the gaming table was a certain Don José Marratti, the same man whom I had known in the Spanish army under the name of Don Pepe il Cadetto, who a few years afterwards assumed the name of Afflisio and came to such a bad end. That faro bank won in a few days three hundred thousand francs. In a capital, that would not have been considered a large sum, but in a commercial and industrial city like Lyons it raised the alarm amongst the merchants, and the Ultramontanes thought of taking their leave.

It was in Lyons that a respectable individual, whose acquaintance I made at the house of M. de Rochebaron, obtained for me the favour of being initiated into the sublime trifles of Freemasonry. I arrived in Paris a simple apprentice; a few months after my arrival I became companion and master; the last is certainly the highest degree in Freemasonry, for all the other degrees which I took afterwards are only pleasing inventions, which, although symbolical, add nothing to the dignity of master.

No one in this world can obtain a knowledge of everything, but every man who feels himself endowed with faculties and can realise the extent of his moral strength, should endeavour to obtain the greatest possible amount of knowledge. A well born young man who wishes to travel and know not only the world but also what is called good society, who does not want to find himself under certain circumstances inferior to his equals and excluded from participating in all their pleasures, must get himself initiated into what is called Freemasonry, even if it is only to know superficially what Freemasonry is. It is a charitable institution which, at certain times and in certain places, may have been a pretext for criminal underplots gotten up for the overthrow of public order; but is there anything under heaven that has not been abused? Have we not seen the Jesuits, under the cloak of our Holy Religion, thrust into the parricidal hand of blind enthusiasts the dagger with which kings were to be assassinated? All men of importance, I mean those whose social existence is marked by merit, learning or wealth, can be (and many of them are) Freemasons; is it possible to suppose that such meetings, in which the initiated, making it a law never to speak *intra muros* of either politics, religions or governments, converse only

concerning emblems which are either moral or trifling—is it possible to suppose, I repeat, that those meetings, in which the governments may have their own creatures, can offer dangers sufficiently serious to warrant the proscriptions of kings or the excommunications of popes?

In reality such proceedings miss the end for which they are undertaken, and the Pope, in spite of his infallibility, will not prevent his persecutions from giving Freemasonry an importance which it would perhaps never have obtained if it had been left alone. Mystery is the essence of man's nature, and whatever presents itself to mankind under a mysterious appearance will always excite curiosity and be sought, even when men are satisfied that the veil covers nothing but a cypher.

Upon the whole, I would advise all well born young men who intend to travel to become Freemasons; but I would likewise advise them to be careful in selecting a lodge, because, although bad company cannot have any influence while inside the lodge, the candidate must guard against bad acquaintances.

Those who become Freemasons only for the sake of finding out the secret of the order run a very great risk of growing old under the trowel without ever realising their purpose. Yet there is a secret, but it is so inviolable that it has never been confided or whispered to anyone. Those who stop at the outward crust of things imagine that the secret consists in words, in signs, or that the main point of it is to be found only in reaching the highest degree. This is a mistaken view; the man who guesses the secret of Freemasonry—and to know it you *must* guess it—reaches that point only through long attendance in the lodges, through deep thinking, comparison and deduction. He would not trust that secret to his best friend in Freemasonry because he is aware that, if his friend has not found it out, he could not make any use of it after it had been whispered in his ear. No, he keeps his peace, and the secret remains a secret.

Everything done in a lodge must be secret; but those who have unscrupulously revealed what is done in the lodge have been unable to reveal that which is essential; they had no knowledge of it, and, had they known it, they certainly would not have unveiled the mystery of the ceremonies.

The impression felt in our days by the non-initiated is of the same nature as that felt in former times by those who were not initiated into the mysteries enacted at Eleusis in honour of Ceres. But the mysteries of Eleusis interested the whole of Greece, and whoever had attained some eminence in the society of those days had an ardent wish to take a part in those mysterious ceremonies, while Freemasonry, among many men of the highest merit, contains a crowd of scoundrels whom no society ought to acknowledge because they are the refuse of mankind as far as morality is concerned.

In the mysteries of Ceres an inscrutable silence was long kept, owing to the veneration in which they were held. Besides, what was there in them that could be revealed? The three words which the hierophant said to the initiated? But what would that revelation have come to?

Only to dishonour the indiscreet initiate, for they were barbarous words unknown to the vulgar. I have read somewhere that the three sacred words of the mysteries of Eleusis meant: "Watch, and do no evil." The sacred words and the secrets of the various masonic degrees are about as criminal.

The initiation into the mysteries of Eleusis lasted nine days. The ceremonies were very imposing, and the company of the highest. Plutarch informs us that Alcibiades was sentenced to death and his property confiscated because he had dared to turn the mysteries into ridicule in his house. He was even sentenced to be cursed by the priests and priestesses, but the curse was not pronounced because one of the priestesses opposed it, saying, "I am a priestess to bless and not to curse!"

Sublime words! Lesson of wisdom and of morality which the Pope despises, but which the Gospel teaches and which the Saviour prescribes.

In our days nothing is important, and nothing is sacred, for our cosmopolitan philosophers.

Botarelli publishes in a pamphlet all the ceremonies of the Freemasons, and the only sentence passed on him is, "He is a scoundrel." We knew that before!

A prince in Naples and M. Hamilton in his own house perform the miracle of St. Januarius; they are, most likely, very merry over their performance, and many more with them. Yet the King wears on his royal breast a star with the following device around the image of St. Januarius: *In sanguine jædus*. In our days everything is inconsistent, and nothing has any meaning. Yet it is right to go ahead, for to stop on the road would be to go from bad to worse.

We left Lyons in the public diligence and were five days on our road to Paris. Baletti had given notice of his departure to his family; they therefore knew when to expect him. We were eight in the coach and our seats were very uncomfortable, for it was a large oval in shape, so that no one had a corner. If that vehicle had been built in a country where equality was a principle hallowed by the laws, it would not have been a bad illustration. I thought it was absurd; but I was in a foreign country, and I said nothing. Besides, being an Italian, would it have been right for me not to admire everything which was French, and particularly in France? Example, an oval diligence; I respected the fashion but found it detestable, and the singular motion of that vehicle had the same effect upon me as the rolling of a ship in a heavy sea. Yet it was well hung, but the worst jolting would have disturbed me less.

As the diligence undulates in the rapidity of its pace, it has been called a gondola, but I was a judge of gondolas, and I thought there was no family likeness between the coach and the Venetian boats, which with two hearty rowers glide along so swiftly and smoothly.

The effect of the movement was that I had to throw up whatever was on my stomach. My travelling companions thought me bad company, but they did not say so; I was in France and among Frenchmen, who know what politeness is. They only remarked that very likely I had

eaten too much at my supper, and a Parisian abbé, in order to excuse me, observed that my stomach was weak. A discussion arose.

"Gentlemen," I said in my vexation, and rather angrily, "you are all wrong, for my stomach is excellent and I have not had any supper."

Thereupon an elderly man told me, with a voice full of sweetness, that I ought not to say that the gentlemen were wrong, though I might say that they were not right, thus imitating Cicero, who, instead of declaring to the Romans that Catilina and the other conspirators were dead, only said that they had lived.

"Is it not the same thing?"

"I beg your pardon, sir; one way of speaking is polite, the other is not." And after treating me to a long dissertation on politeness, he concluded by saying, with a smile, "I suppose you are an Italian?"

"Yes, I am; but would you oblige me by telling me how you found it out?"

"Oh! I guessed it from the attention with which you listened to my long prattle."

Everybody laughed, and I, much pleased with his eccentricity, began to coax him. He was the tutor of a young boy of twelve or thirteen years who was seated near him. I made him give me during the journey lessons in French politeness, and, when we parted, he took me aside in a friendly manner, saying that he wished to make me a small present.

"What is it?"

"You must abandon, and, if I may say so, forget, the particle *non*, which you use frequently at random. *Non* is not a French word; instead of that unpleasant monosyllable, say *pardon*. *Non* is equal to giving the lie; never say it, or prepare yourself to give and receive sword-stabs every moment."

"I thank you, monsieur; your present is very precious, and I promise you never to say *non* again."

During the first fortnight of my stay in Paris it seemed to me that I had become the most faulty man alive, for I never ceased begging pardon. I even thought one evening at the theatre that I should have a quarrel for having begged somebody's pardon in the wrong place. A young fop, coming to the pit, trod on my foot, and I hastened to say, "Your pardon, sir."

"Sir, pardon me yourself."

"No, yourself."

"Yourself!"

"Well, sir, let us pardon and embrace one another!"

The embrace put a stop to the discussion.

One day during the journey, having fallen asleep from fatigue in the inconvenient "gondola," someone plucked me by the arm.

"Ah, sir! look at that mansion!" said my neighbour.

"I see it; what of it?"

"Ah! I pray you, do you not consider it . . ."

"I consider it nothing wonderful; and you?"

"Nothing wonderful if it were not situated at a distance of forty

leagues from Paris. But here! Ah! would my *badauds* of Parisians believe that such a beautiful mansion can be found forty leagues distant from the metropolis? How ignorant a man is when he has never travelled!"

"You are quite right."

That man was a Parisian and a *badaud* to the backbone, like a Gaul in the days of Cæsar.

But if the Parisians are lounging about from morning till night, enjoying everything around them, a foreigner like myself ought to have been a greater *badaud* than they! The difference between us was that, being accustomed to see things as they are, I was astonished at seeing them often covered with a mask which changed their nature, while the surprise of the Parisians often arises from their suspecting what the mask conceals.

What delighted me on my arrival in Paris was the magnificent road made by Louis XV, the cleanliness of the hotels, the excellent fare they give, the quickness of the service, the excellent beds, the modest appearance of the attendant, who generally is the most accomplished girl of the house and whose decency, modest manners and neatness inspire the most shameless libertine with respect. Where is the Italian who is pleased with the effrontery and insolence of the hotel waiters in Italy? In my days people did not know in France what it was to overcharge; it was truly the home of foreigners. True, they had the unpleasantness of often witnessing acts of odious despotism, *lettres de cachet*, etc.; it was the despotism of a king. Since that time the French have the despotism of the people. Is it less obnoxious?

We dined at Fontainebleau, a name derived from Fontaine-belle-eau; and, when we were only two leagues from Paris, we saw a berlin advancing towards us. As it came near the diligence, my friend called out to the postillions to stop; in the berlin was his mother, who offered me the welcome given to an expected friend. His mother was the celebrated actress Silvia, and, when I had been introduced to her, she said to me, "I hope, sir, that my son's friend will accept a share of our family supper this evening."

I accepted gratefully and sat down again in the "gondola"; Baletti got into the berlin with his mother, and we continued our journey.

On reaching Paris, I found a servant of Silvia's waiting for me with a coach; he accompanied me to my lodging to leave my luggage, and we repaired to Baletti's house, which was only fifty yards distant from my dwelling.

Baletti presented me to his father, who was known under the name of Mario. Silvia and Mario were the stage names assumed by Monsieur and Madame Baletti, and at that time it was the custom in France to call the Italian actors by the names they had on the stage. *Bon jour, monsieur Arlequin; bon jour, monsieur Pantalon*—such was the manner in which the French used to address the actors who personified those characters on the stage.

CHAPTER 29

To celebrate the arrival of her son, Silvia gave a splendid supper, to which she had invited all her relatives, and it was a good opportunity for me to make their acquaintance. Baletti's father, who had just recovered from a long illness, was not with us, but we had his father's sister, who was older than Mario. She was known in the literary world by several translations, under her theatrical name of Flaminia, but I had a great wish to make her acquaintance, less on that account than in consequence of the story, known throughout Italy, of the stay that three literary men of great fame had made in Paris. Those three literati were the Marquis Maffei, the Abbé Conti and Pierre-Jacques Martelli, who became enemies, according to public rumour, owing to the belief entertained by each of them that he possessed the favours of the actress; and, being men of learning, they fought with the pen. Martelli composed a satire against Maffei, in which he designated him by the anagram of Femia.

I had been announced to Flaminia as a candidate for literary fame, and she thought she honoured me by addressing me at all; but she was wrong, for she displeased me greatly by her face, her manners, her style, even by the sound of her voice. Without saying it positively, she made me understand that, being herself an illustrious member of the republic of letters, she was well aware that she was speaking to an insect. She seemed as if she wanted to dictate to everybody around her, and she very likely thought that she had the right to do so at the age of sixty, particularly towards a young novice only twenty-five years old, who had not yet contributed anything to the literary treasury. In order to please her I spoke to her of the Abbé Conti, and I had occasion to quote two lines of that profound writer. Madame corrected me with a patronising air for my pronunciation of the word *sceura*, which means "divided," saying that it ought to be pronounced *sceura*, and she added that I ought to be very glad to have learned as much on the first day of my arrival in Paris, telling me that it would be an important day in my life.

"Madame, I came here to learn and not to unlearn. You will kindly allow me to tell you that the pronunciation of that word is *sceura* with a *v*, and not *sceura* with a *u*, because it is a contraction of *sceverra*."

"It remains to be seen which of us is wrong."

"You, madame, according to Ariosto, who makes *sceura* rhyme with *perseura*, and the rhyme would be false with *sceura*, which is not an Italian word."

She would have kept up the discussion, but her husband, a man eighty years of age, told her she was wrong. She held her tongue, but from that time she told everybody that I was an impostor.

Her husband, Louis Riccoboni, better known as Lelio, was the same who had brought the Italian company to Paris in 1716 and placed it at the service of the Regent; he was a man of great merit. He

had been very handsome and justly enjoyed the esteem of the public in consequence not only of his talent but also of the purity of his life.

During supper my principal occupation was to study Silvia, who then enjoyed the greatest reputation, and I judged her to be even above it. She was then about fifty years old, her figure was elegant, her air noble, her manners graceful and easy; she was affable, witty, kind to everybody, simple and unpretending. Her face was an enigma, for it inspired everyone with the warmest sympathy, and yet, if you examined it attentively, there was not one beautiful feature; she could not be called handsome, but no one could have thought her ugly. Yet she was not one of those women who are neither handsome nor ugly, for she possessed a certain something which struck one at first sight and captivated the interest. Then what was she?

Beautiful, certainly, but owing to charms unknown to all those who, not being attracted towards her by an irresistible feeling which compelled them to love her, had not the courage to study her or the constancy to obtain a thorough knowledge of her.

Silvia was the adoration of France, and her talent was the real support of all the comedies which the greatest authors wrote for her, especially of the plays of Marivaux, for, but for her, his comedies would never have gone to posterity. Never was an actress found who could replace her, and to find one it would be necessary that she should unite in herself all the perfections which Silvia possessed for the difficult profession of the stage: action, voice, intelligence, wit, countenance, manners and a deep knowledge of the human heart. In Silvia every quality was from nature, and the art which gave the last touch of perfection to her qualities was never seen.

To the qualities which I have just mentioned, Silvia added another which surrounded her with a brilliant halo and the absence of which would not have prevented her from being the shining star of the stage: she led a virtuous life. She had been anxious to have friends, but she had dismissed all lovers, refusing to avail herself of a privilege which she could easily have enjoyed but which would have rendered her contemptible in her own estimation. This irreproachable conduct obtained for her a reputation of respectability which at her age would have been held as ridiculous and even insulting by any other woman belonging to the same profession; and many ladies of the highest rank honoured her with their friendship more even than with their patronage. Never did the capricious audience of a Parisian pit dare to hiss Silvia, not even in her performance of characters which the public disliked; and it was the general opinion that she was in every way above her profession.

Silvia did not think that her good conduct was a merit, for she knew that she was virtuous only because her self-love compelled her to be so, and she never exhibited any pride or assumed any superiority towards her theatrical sisters, although, satisfied to shine by their talent or their beauty, they cared little about rendering themselves conspicuous by their virtue. Silvia loved them all, and they all loved

her; she always was the first to praise, openly and with good faith, the talent of her rivals; but she lost nothing by it because, being their superior in talent and enjoying a spotless reputation, her rivals could not rise above her.

Nature deprived that charming woman of ten years of life; she became consumptive at the age of sixty, ten years after I had made her acquaintance. The climate of Paris often proves fatal to our Italian actresses. Two years before her death I saw her perform the character of Marianne in the comedy of *Marivaux*, and, in spite of her age and declining health, the illusion was complete. She died in my presence, holding her daughter in her arms, and she was giving her the advice of a tender mother five minutes before she breathed her last. She was honourably buried in the church of St. Sauveur, without the slightest opposition from the venerable priest, who, far from sharing the anti-Christian intolerance of the clergy in general, said that her profession as an actress had not hindered her from being a good Christian and that the earth was the common mother of all human beings, as Jesus Christ had been the Saviour of all mankind.

You will forgive me, dear reader, if I have made you attend the funeral of Silvia ten years before her death; believe me, I have no intention of performing a miracle; you may console yourself with the idea that I shall spare you that unpleasant task when poor Silvia dies.

Her only daughter, the object of her adoration, was seated next to her at the supper-table. She was then only nine years old, and, being entirely taken up by her mother, I paid no attention to her; my interest in her was to come.

After the supper, which was protracted to a late hour, I repaired to the house of Madame Quinson, my landlady, where I found myself very comfortable. When I woke in the morning, the said Madame Quinson came to my room to tell me that a servant was outside and wished to offer me his services. I asked her to send him in, and I saw a man of very small stature; that did not please me, and I told him so.

"My small stature, your honour, will be a guarantee that I shall never borrow your clothes to go to some amorous rendezvous."

"Your name?"

"Any name you please."

"What do you mean? I want the name by which you are known."

"I have none. Every master I serve calls me according to his fancy, and I have served more than fifty in my life. You may call me what you like."

"But you must have a family name."

"I never had any family. I had a name, I believe, in my young days, but I have forgotten it since I have been in service. My name has changed with every new master."

"Well! I shall call you *Esprit*."

"You do me a great honour."

"Here, go and get me change for a louis."

"I have it, sir."

"I see you are rich."

"At your service, sir."

"Where can I enquire about you?"

"At the agency for servants. Madame Quinson, besides, can answer your inquiries. Everybody in Paris knows me."

"That is enough. I shall give you thirty sous a day, you must find your own clothes; you will sleep where you like, and you must be here at seven o'clock every morning."

Baletti called on me and entreated me to take my meals every day at his house. After his visit I told Esprit to take me to the Palais Royal, and I left him at the gates. I felt the greatest curiosity about the renowned garden, and at first I examined everything. I see a rather fine garden, walks lined with big trees, fountains, high houses all round the garden, a great many men and women walking about, benches here and there forming shops for the sale of newspapers, perfumes, toothpicks and other trifles. I see a quantity of chairs for hire at the rate of one sou, men reading the newspaper under the shade of the trees, girls and men breakfasting either alone or in company, waiters who are rapidly going up and down a narrow staircase hidden under the foliage.

I sit down at a small table; a waiter comes immediately to inquire my wishes. I ask for some chocolate made with water; he brings me some, but very bad, although served in a splendid silver-gilt cup. I tell him to give me some coffee, if it is good.

"Excellent, I made it myself yesterday."

"Yesterday! I do not want it."

"The milk is very good."

"Milk! I never drink any. Make me a cup of fresh coffee without milk."

"Without milk! Well, sir, we never make coffee but in the afternoon. Would you like a good *bavaroise*, or a decanter of orgeat?"

"Yes, give me the orgeat."

I find that beverage delicious, and make up my mind to have it daily for my breakfast. I inquire from the waiter whether there is any news; he answers that the Dauphine has been delivered of a prince. An abbé, seated at a table close by, says to him, "You are mad; she has given birth to a princess."

A third man comes forward and exclaims, "I have just returned from Versailles, and the Dauphine has not been delivered of either a prince or a princess."

Then, turning towards me, he says that I look like a foreigner, and, when I say that I am an Italian, he begins to speak to me of the court, the city, the theatres and at last offers to accompany me everywhere. I thank him and take my leave. The abbé rises at the same time, walks with me and tells me the names of all the women we meet in the garden.

A young man comes up to him, they embrace one another, and the

abbé presents him to me as a learned Italian scholar. I address him in Italian, and he answers very wittily, but his way of speaking makes me smile, and I tell him why. He had expressed himself exactly in the style of Boccaccio. My remark pleases him, but I soon prove to him that it is not the right way to speak, however perfect may have been the language of that ancient writer. In less than a quarter of an hour we are excellent friends, for we find that our tastes are the same.

My new friend was a poet, as I was; he was an admirer of Italian literature, while I admired the French.

We exchange addresses and promise to see one another very often.

I see a crowd in one corner of the garden, everybody standing still and looking up. I inquire from my friend whether there is anything wonderful going on.

"These persons are watching the meridian; everyone holds his watch in his hand in order to regulate it exactly at noon."

"Is there not a meridian everywhere?"

"Yes; but the meridian of the Palais Royal is the most exact."

I laugh heartily.

"Why do you laugh?"

"Because it is impossible for all meridians not to be the same. That is true *badauderie*."

My friend looks at me for a moment, then he laughs likewise and supplies me with ample food to ridicule the worthy Parisians. We leave the Palais Royal through the main gate, and I observe another crowd of people before a shop, on the signboard of which I read, "At the Sign of the Civet Cat."

"What is the matter here?"

"Now indeed you are going to laugh. All these honest persons are waiting their turn to get their snuffboxes filled."

"Is there no other dealer in snuff?"

"It is sold everywhere, but for the last three weeks nobody will use any snuff but that sold at the Civet Cat."

"Is it better than anywhere else?"

"Perhaps it is not as good; but since it was brought into fashion by the Duchesse de Chartres, nobody will have any other."

"But how did she manage to render it so fashionable?"

"Simply by stopping her carriage two or three times before the shop to have her snuffbox filled, and by saying aloud to the young girl who handed back the box that her snuff was the very best in Paris. The *badauds*, who never fail to congregate near a prince's carriage, no matter if they have seen him a hundred times or they know him to be as ugly as a monkey, repeated the words of the duchess everywhere, and that was enough to send here in a hurry all the snuff-takers of the capital. This woman will make a fortune, she sells at least one hundred crowns' worth of snuff every day."

"Very likely the duchess has no idea of the good she has done."

"Quite the reverse, for it was a cunning artifice on her part. The

duchess, feeling interested in the newly married young woman and wishing to serve her in a delicate manner, thought of that expedient, which has met with complete success. You cannot imagine how kind the Parisians are! You are now in the only country in the world where wit can make a fortune by selling either a genuine or a false article; in the first case, it receives the welcome of intelligent and talented people; and in the second, fools are always ready to reward it, for silliness is truly a characteristic of the people here, and, however wonderful it may appear, silliness is the daughter of wit. Therefore it is not a paradox to say that the French would be wiser if they were less witty.

"The gods worshipped here—although no altars are raised to them—are Novelty and Fashion. Let a man run, and everybody will run after him. The crowd will not stop unless the man is proved to be mad; but to prove it is indeed a difficult task because we have a crowd of men who, mad from their birth, are still considered wise.

"The snuff of the Civet Cat is but one example of the facility with which the crowd can be attracted to one particular spot. The King was one day hunting and found himself at the Neuilly Bridge; being thirsty, he wanted a glass of ratafia. He stopped at the door of a drinking-booth, and by the luckiest chance the poor keeper of the place happened to have a bottle of that liquor. The King, after he had drunk a small glass, fancied a second one and said that he had never tasted such delicious ratafia in his life. That was enough to give the ratafia of the good man of Neuilly the reputation of being the best in Europe—the King had said so. The consequence was that the most brilliant society frequented the tavern of the delighted publican, who is now a very wealthy man and has built on the very spot a splendid house, on which can be read the following rather comic motto, *Ex liquidis solidum*, which certainly came out of the head of one of the Forty Immortals. Which gods must the worthy tavernkeeper worship? Silliness, frivolity and mirth."

"It seems to me," I replied, "that such approval, such ratification of the opinions expressed by the King, the princes of the blood, etc., is rather a proof of the affection felt for them by the nation, for the French carry that affection to such an extent that they believe them infallible."

"It is certain that everything here causes foreigners to believe that the French people adore the King; but all thinking men here know well enough that there is more show than reality in that adoration, and the court has no confidence in it. When the King comes to Paris, everybody calls out, '*Vive le Roi!*' because some idle fellow begins or because some policeman has given the signal from the midst of the crowd; but it is really a cry which has no importance, a cry given out of cheerfulness, sometimes out of fear, and which the King himself does not accept as gospel. He does not feel comfortable in Paris and prefers being in Versailles, surrounded by twenty-five thousand men who protect him against the fury of that same people of Paris,

who, if ever they became wiser, might very well one day call out, 'Death to the King!' instead of 'Long life to the King!' Louis XIV was well aware of it, and several councillors of the upper chamber lost their lives for having advised the assembling of the States-General in order to find some remedy for the misfortunes of the country. France never had any love for any kings, with the exception of St. Louis, Louis XII and the great and good Henry IV; and even in the last case the love of the nation was not sufficient to defend the King against the dagger of the Jesuits, an accursed race, the enemy of nations as well as of kings. The present King, who is weak and entirely led by his ministers, said candidly at the time he was just recovering from illness, 'I am surprised at the rejoicings of my people in consequence of my health being restored, for I cannot imagine why they should love me so dearly.' Many kings might repeat the same words—at least, if love is to be measured according to the amount of good actually done. That candid remark of Louis XV has been highly praised, but some philosopher of the court ought to have informed him that he was so much loved because he had been surnamed *le bien aimé*."

"Surname or nickname. But are there any philosophers at the court of France?"

"No; for philosophers and courtiers are as widely different as light and darkness; but there are some men of intelligence who champ the bit from motives of ambition and interest."

As we were thus conversing, M. Patu (such was the name of my new acquaintance) escorted me as far as the door of Silvia's house; he congratulated me upon being one of her friends, and we parted company.

I found the amiable actress in good company. She introduced me to all her guests and gave me some particulars respecting every one of them. The name of Crébillon struck my ear.

"What, sir!" I said to him, "am I fortunate enough to see you? For eight years you have charmed me, for eight years I have longed to know you. Listen, I beg of you."

I then recited the finest passage of his *Zénobie et Rhadamiste*, which I had translated into blank verse. Silvia was delighted to see the pleasure enjoyed by Crébillon in hearing, at the age of eighty, his own lines in a language which he knew thoroughly and loved as much as his own. He himself recited the same passage in French and politely pointed out the parts in which he thought I had improved on the original. I thanked him but was not deceived by his compliment.

We sat down to supper, and, being asked what I had already seen in Paris, I related everything I had done, omitting only my conversation with Patu. After I had talked for a long time, Crébillon, who had evidently observed better than anyone else the road I had chosen in order to learn the good, as well as the bad, qualities of his countrymen, said to me:

"For the first day, sir, I think that what you have done gives great

hopes of you, and without any doubt you will make rapid progress. You tell your story well, and you speak French in such a way as to be perfectly understood; yet all you say is only Italian dressed in French. That is a novelty which causes you to be listened to with interest and which captivates the attention of your audience; I must even add that your Franco-Italian language is just the thing to enlist in your favour the sympathy of those who listen to you, because it is singular, new, and because you are in a country where everybody worships those two divinities—novelty and singularity. Nevertheless you must begin to-morrow and apply yourself in good earnest, in order to acquire a thorough knowledge of our language, for the same persons who warmly applaud you now will in two or three months laugh at you."

"I believe it, sir, and that is what I fear; therefore the principal object of my visit here is to devote myself entirely to the study of the French language. But, sir, how shall I find a teacher? I am a very unpleasant pupil, always asking questions, curious, troublesome, insatiable; and even supposing that I could meet with the teacher I require, I am afraid I am not rich enough to pay him."

"For fifty years, sir, I have been looking for a pupil such as you have just described yourself, and I would willingly pay you myself if you would come to my house and receive my lessons. I reside in the Marais, Rue des Douze-Portes. I have the best Italian poets; I will make you translate them into French, and you need not be afraid of my finding you insatiable."

I accepted with joy; I did not know how to express my gratitude, but both his offer and the few words of my answer bore the stamp of truth and frankness.

Crébillon was a giant; he was six feet tall, three inches taller than I. He had a good appetite, could tell a good story without laughing, was celebrated for his witty repartees and his sociable manners; but he spent his life at home, seldom going out and seeing hardly anyone, because he always had a pipe in his mouth and was surrounded by at least twenty cats, with which he would amuse himself all day. He had an old housekeeper, a cook, and a man-servant. His housekeeper had the management of everything; she never allowed him to be in need of anything, and she gave no account of his money, which she kept altogether, because he never asked her to render any accounts. The expression of Crébillon's face was that of the lion—or of the cat, which is the same thing. He was one of the royal censors, and he told me that it was an amusement for him. His housekeeper was in the habit of reading him the works brought for his examination, and she would stop reading when she came to a passage which, in her opinion, deserved his censure; but sometimes they were of a different opinion, and then their discussions were truly amusing. I once heard the housekeeper send away an author with these words, "Come again next week; *we* have had no time to examine your manuscript."

During a whole year I paid M. Crébillon three visits every week, and from him I learned all I know of the French language; but I found it

impossible to get rid of my Italian idioms. I remark them readily enough when I meet with them in other people, but they flow naturally from my pen without my being aware of it. I am satisfied that, whatever I may do, I shall never be able to recognise it any more than I can find out in what consists the bad Latin style so constantly alleged against Livy.

I composed a stanza of eight verses on some subject which I do not recollect and gave it to Crébillon, asking him to correct it. He read it attentively and said to me, "These eight verses are good and regular; the thought is fine and truly poetical; the style is perfect; and yet the stanza is bad."

"How so?"

"I do not know. I cannot tell you what is wanting. Imagine that you see a man handsome, well made, amiable, witty—in fact, perfect, according to your most severe judgment. A woman comes in, sees him, looks at him and goes away telling you that the man does not please her. 'But what fault do you find in him, madame?' 'None, only he does not please me.' You look again at the man, you examine him a second time, and you find that, in order to give him a heavenly voice, he has been deprived of that which constitutes a man, and you are compelled to acknowledge that a spontaneous feeling has stood the woman in good stead."

It was by that comparison that Crébillon explained to me a thing almost inexplicable, for taste and feeling alone can account for a thing which is subject to no rule whatever.

We talked a great deal of Louis XIV, whom Crébillon had known well for fifteen years, and he related several very curious anecdotes which were generally unknown. Amongst other things he assured me that the Siamese ambassadors were cheats, paid by Madame de Maintenon. He told us likewise that he had never finished his tragedy of Cromwell because the king had told him one day not to wear out his pen on a scoundrel.

Crébillon mentioned likewise his tragedy of *Catiline* and told me that, in his opinion, it was the most deficient of his works, but that he never would have consented, even to make it a good tragedy, to represent Cæsar as a young man because he would in that case have made the public laugh, as they would do if Medea were to appear previous to her acquaintance with Jason.

He praised Voltaire's talent very highly, but accused him of having stolen from him the scene of the Senate. He, however, rendered him full justice, saying that he was a true historian and able to write history as well as tragedies, but that he unfortunately adulterated history by mixing with it a number of light anecdotes and tales for the sake of rendering it more attractive. According to Crébillon, the *Man with the Iron Mask* was nothing but an idle tale, and he had been assured of it by Louis XIV himself.

On the day of my first meeting with Crébillon at Silvia's, *Cénie*, a play by Madame de Graffigny, was being performed at the Italian Theatre, and I left early in order to get a good seat in the pit.

The ladies, all covered with diamonds, who were taking possession of the private boxes engrossed all my interest and all my attention. I wore a very fine suit, but my open ruffles and the buttons all along my coat showed at once that I was a foreigner, for the fashion was not the same in Paris. I was gaping in the air and listlessly looking round when a gentleman, splendidly dressed and three times stouter than I, came up and inquired whether I was a foreigner. I answered affirmatively, and he politely asked me how I liked Paris; I praised Paris very warmly. But at that moment a very stout lady, brilliant with diamonds, entered the box near us. Her enormous size astonished me, and, like a fool, I said to the gentleman, "Who is that fat sow?"

"She is the wife of this fat pig."

"Ah! I beg your pardon a thousand times!"

But my stout gentleman cared nothing for my apologies, and, very far from being angry, he almost choked with laughter. This was the happy result of the practical and natural philosophy which Frenchmen cultivate so well and which insures the happiness of their existence under an appearance of frivolity!

I was confused, I was in despair, but the stout gentleman continued to laugh heartily. At last he left the pit, and a minute afterwards I saw him enter the box and speak to his wife. I was keeping an eye on them without daring to look at them openly, and suddenly the lady, following the example of her husband, burst into a loud laugh. Their mirth making me more uncomfortable, I was leaving the pit when the husband called out to me, "Sir! sir!"

I could not go away without being guilty of impoliteness, and I went up to their box. Then, with a serious countenance and with great affability, he begged my pardon for having laughed so much and very graciously invited me to come to his house and sup with them that same evening. I thanked him politely, saying that I had a previous engagement. But he renewed his entreaties, and, his wife pressing me in the most engaging manner, I told them, in order to prove that I was not trying to elude their invitation, that I was expected to sup at Silvia's house.

"In that case I am certain," said the gentleman, "of obtaining your release if you do not object. Allow me to go myself to Silvia."

It would have been uncourteous on my part to resist any longer. He left the box and returned almost immediately with my friend Baletti, who told me that his mother was delighted to see me making such excellent acquaintances and would expect to see me at dinner the next day. He whispered to me that my new acquaintance was M. de Beauchamp, Receiver-General of Taxes.

As soon as the performance was over, I offered my hand to madame, and we drove to their mansion in a magnificent carriage. There I found the abundance—or, rather, the profusion which in Paris is exhibited by the men of finance: numerous society, high play, good cheer and open cheerfulness. The supper was not over till one o'clock in the morning. Madame's private carriage drove me to my lodgings. Their house offered

me a kind welcome during the whole of my stay in Paris, and I must add that my new friends proved very useful to me. Some persons assert that foreigners find the first fortnight in Paris very dull because a little time is necessary to get introduced; but I was fortunate enough to find myself within twenty-four hours established on as good a footing as I could desire, and the consequence was that I felt delighted with Paris and certain that my stay would prove an agreeable one.

The next morning Patu called and made me a present of his prose panegyric on the Maréchal de Saxe. We went out together and took a walk in the Tuileries, where he introduced me to Madame du Boccage, who made a good jest in speaking of the Maréchal de Saxe.

"It is singular," she said, "that we cannot have a *De profundis* for a man who makes us sing the *Te Deum* so often."

As we left the Tuileries, Patu took me to the house of a celebrated actress of the opera, Mademoiselle Le Fel, the favourite of all Paris and a member of the Royal Academy of Music. She had three young and charming children, who were fluttering around her like butterflies.

"I adore them," she said to me.

"They deserve adoration for their beauty," I answered, "although they have each a different cast of countenance."

"No wonder! The oldest is the son of the Duke d'Anneci, the second of Count d'Egmont, and the youngest is the offspring of Maisonrouge, who has just married Romainville."

"Ah! pray excuse me; I thought you were the mother of the three."

"You were not mistaken; I am their mother."

As she said these words, she looked at Patu, and both burst into hearty laughter, which did not make me blush, but which showed me my blunder.

I was a novice in Paris and had not been accustomed to see women encroach upon the privilege which men alone generally enjoy. Yet Mademoiselle Le Fel was not a bold-faced woman; she was even rather ladylike, but she was what is called "above prejudices." If I had known the manners of the time better, I should have been aware that such things were everyday occurrences, and that the noblemen who thus sprinkled their progeny everywhere were in the habit of leaving their children in the hands of their mothers, who were well paid. The more fruitful, therefore, these ladies were, the greater was their income.

My want of experience often led me into serious blunders, and Mademoiselle Le Fel would, I have no doubt, have laughed at anyone telling her that I had some wit, after the stupid mistake of which I had been guilty.

Another day, being at the house of Lani, ballet-master of the opera, I saw five or six young girls of thirteen or fourteen years of age, accompanied by their mothers and all exhibiting that air of modesty which is characteristic of a good education. I addressed a few gallant words to them, and they answered me with downcast eyes. One of them having complained of the headache, I offered her my smelling-bottle, and one

of her companions said to her, "Very likely you did not sleep well last night."

"Oh! it is not that," answered the modest-looking Agnes. "I think I am pregnant."

On receiving this unexpected reply from a girl I had taken for a maiden, I said to her, "I should never have supposed that you were married, madame."

She looked at me with evident surprise for a moment, then turned towards her friend, and both began to laugh immoderately. Ashamed—but for them more than for myself—I left the house with a firm resolution never again to take virtue for granted in a class of women amongst whom it is so scarce. To look for, even to suppose, modesty amongst the nymphs of the green-room, is, indeed, to be very foolish; they pride themselves upon having none and laugh at those who are simple enough to suppose them better than they are.

Thanks to my friend Patu, I made the acquaintance of all the women who enjoyed some reputation in Paris. He was fond of the fair sex, but, unfortunately for him, he had not a constitution like mine, and his love of pleasure killed him very early. If he had lived, he would have gone down to posterity in the wake of Voltaire, but he paid the debt of nature at the age of thirty.

I learned from him the secret which several young French *litterati* employ in order to make certain of the perfection of their prose when they want to write anything requiring as perfect a style as they can obtain, such as panegyrics, funeral orations, eulogies, dedications, etc. It was by surprise that I wrested that secret from Patu.

Being at his house one morning, I observed on his table several sheets of paper covered with dodecasyllabic blank verse.

I read a dozen of them and told him that, although the verses were very fine, the reading caused me more pain than pleasure.

"They express the same ideas as the panegyric of the Maréchal de Saxe, but I confess that your prose pleases me a great deal more."

"My prose would not have pleased you so much if it had not been at first composed in blank verse."

"Then you take very great trouble for nothing."

"No trouble at all, for I have not the slightest difficulty in writing that sort of poetry. I write it as easily as prose."

"Do you think that your prose is better when you compose it from your own poetry?"

"No doubt of it; it is much better, and I also secure the advantage that my prose is not full of half verses which flow from the pen of the writer without his being aware of it."

"Is that a fault?"

"A great one and not to be forgiven. Prose intermixed with occasional verses is worse than prosaic poetry."

"Is it true that the verses which, like parasites, steal into a funeral oration, must be sadly out of place?"

"Certainly. Take the example of Tacitus, who begins his history

of Rome by these words: *Urbem Romam a principio reges habuere*. They form a very poor Latin hexameter, which the great historian certainly never made on purpose and which he never remarked when he revised his work, for there is no doubt that, if he had observed it, he would have altered that sentence. Are not such verses considered a blemish in Italian prose?"

"Decidedly. But I must say that a great many poor writers have purposely inserted such verses into their prose, believing that they would make it more euphonious. Hence the tawdriness which is justly alleged against much Italian literature. But I suppose you are the only writer who takes so much pains."

"The only one? Certainly not. All the authors who can compose blank verses very easily, as I can, employ them when they intend to make a fair copy of their prose. Ask Crébillon, the Abbé de Voisenon, La Harpe, anyone you like, and they will all tell you the same thing. Voltaire was the first to have recourse to that art in the small pieces in which his prose is truly charming. For instance, the epistle to Madame du Chatelet, which is magnificent. Read it, and, if you find a single hemistich in it, I will confess myself in the wrong."

I felt some curiosity about the matter and asked Crébillon about it. He told me that Patu was right, but he added that he had never practiced that art himself.

Patu wished very much to take me to the opera in order to witness the effect produced upon me by the performance, which must truly astonish an Italian. *Les Fêtes Vénitiennes* was the title of the opera which was in vogue just then—a title full of interest for me. We went for our forty sous to the pit, in which, although the audience was standing, the company was excellent, for the opera was the favourite amusement of the Parisians.

After a symphony, very fine in its way and executed by an excellent orchestra, the curtain rises, and I see a beautiful scene representing the small St. Mark's Square in Venice, taken from the Island of St. George; but I am shocked to see the ducal palace on my left and the tall steeple on my right—that is to say, the very reverse of reality. I laugh at this ridiculous mistake, and Patu, to whom I explain why I am laughing, cannot help joining me. The music, very fine, although in the ancient style, at first amused me on account of its novelty but soon wearied me. The melopœia fatigued me by its constant and tedious monotony and by the shrieks given out of season. That melopœia of the French replaces—at least they think so—the Greek melopœia and our recitative, which they dislike but which they would admire if they understood Italian.

The action of the opera was limited to a day in the carnival, when the Venetians are in the habit of promenading masked in St. Mark's Square. The stage was animated by gallants, procuresses and women amusing themselves with all sorts of intrigues; the costumes were whimsical and erroneous, but the whole was amusing. I laughed very heartily, and it was truly a curious sight for a Venetian when I saw

the Doge followed by twelve councillors appear on the stage, all dressed in the most ludicrous style and dancing a *pas d'ensemble*. Suddenly the whole of the pit burst into loud applause at the appearance of a tall, well formed dancer, wearing a mask and an enormous black wig, the hair of which went halfway down his back, and dressed in a robe open in front and reaching to his heels. Patu said, almost reverently, "It is the inimitable Duprès." I had heard of him before, and became attentive. I saw that fine figure coming forward with measured steps, and, when the dancer had arrived in front of the stage, he raised slowly his rounded arms, stretched them gracefully backward and forward, moved his feet with precision and lightness, took a few small steps, made some battements and pirouettes and disappeared like a butterfly. The whole had not lasted half a minute. The applause burst from every part of the house; I was astonished and asked my friend the cause of all those bravos.

"We applaud the grace of Duprès and the divine harmony of his movements. He is now sixty years of age, and those who saw him forty years ago say that he is always the same."

"What! Has he never danced in a different style?"

"He could not have danced in a better one, for his style is perfect, and what can you want above perfection?"

"Nothing, unless it be a relative perfection."

"But here it is absolute. Duprès always does the same thing, and every day we fancy we see it for the first time. Such is the power of the good and beautiful, of the true and sublime, which speak to the soul. His dance is true harmony, the real dance, of which you have no idea in Italy."

At the end of the second act Duprès appeared again, still with a mask, and danced to a different tune, but in my opinion doing exactly the same as before. He advanced to the very footlights and stopped one instant in a graceful attitude. Patu wanted to force my admiration, and I gave way. Suddenly everyone around me exclaimed, "Look, look! he is developing himself!"

And in reality he was like an elastic body which, in developing itself, would get larger; I made Patu very happy by telling him that Duprès was truly very graceful in all his movements. Immediately after him we had a female dancer, who jumped about like a fury, cutting to right and left, but heavily; yet she was applauded *con furore*.

"This," said Patu, "is the famous Camargo. I congratulate you, my friend, upon having arrived in Paris in time to see her, for she has accomplished her twelfth lustre."

I confessed that she was a wonderful dancer.

"She is the first artist," continued my friend, "who has dared to spring and jump on a French stage; none ventured upon doing it before her, and, what is more extraordinary, she does not wear any drawers."

"I beg your pardon, but I saw—"

"What? Nothing but her skin, which, to speak the truth, is not made of lilies and roses."

"The Camargo," I said, with an air of repentance, "does not please me; I like Duprès much better."

An elderly admirer of Camargo, seated on my left, told me that in her youth she could perform the *saut de basque* and even the *gargouillade*, and that nobody had ever seen her thighs, although she always danced without drawers.

"But if you never saw her thighs, how do you know that she does not wear silk tights?"

"Oh! that is one of those things which can easily be ascertained. I see you are a foreigner, sir."

"You are right."

But I was delighted at the French opera, with the rapidity of the scenic changes, which are done like lightning at the signal of a whistle—a thing entirely unknown in Italy. I likewise admired the start given to the orchestra by the bâton of the leader, but he disgusted me with the movements of his sceptre right and left, as if he thought that he could give life to all the instruments by the mere motion of his arm. I admired also the silence of the audience, a thing truly wonderful to an Italian, for it is with great reason that people complain of the noise made in Italy while the artists are singing, and ridicule the silence which prevails through the house as soon as the dancers make their appearance on the stage. One would imagine that all the intelligence of the Italians is in their eyes. At the same time I must observe that there is not one country in the world in which extravagance and whimsicalness cannot be found, because the foreigner can make comparisons with what he has seen elsewhere, whilst the natives are not conscious of their errors. Altogether the opera pleased me, but the French comedy captivated me. There the French are truly in their element; they perform splendidly, in a masterly manner, and other nations cannot refuse them the palm which good taste and justice must award to their superiority. I was in the habit of going there every day, and, although sometimes the audience was not composed of two hundred persons, the actors were perfect. I have seen *Le Misanthrope*, *L'Avare*, *Tartuffe*, *Le Joueur*, *Le Glorieux* and many other comedies; and, no matter how often I saw them, I always fancied it was the first time. I arrived in Paris to admire Sarrasin, La Dangeville, La Dumesnil, La Gaussin, La Clairon, Préville and several actresses who, having retired from the stage, were living upon their pension and delighting their circle of friends. I made, amongst others, the acquaintance of the celebrated Le Vasseur. I visited them all with pleasure, and they related to me several very curious anecdotes. They were generally most kindly disposed in every way.

One evening, being in the box of Le Vasseur, the performance was composed of a tragedy in which a very handsome actress had the part of a dumb priestess.

"How pretty she is!" I said.

"Yes, charming," answered Le Vasseur. "She is the daughter of the actor who plays the confidant. She is very pleasant in company and is an actress of good promise."

"I should be very happy to make her acquaintance."

"Oh! well, that is not difficult. Her father and mother are very worthy people, and they will be delighted if you ask them to invite you to supper. They will not disturb you; they will go to bed early and will let you talk with their daughter as long as you please. You are in France, sir; here we know the value of life and try to make the best of it. We love pleasure and esteem ourselves fortunate when we can find the opportunity of enjoying life."

"That is truly charming, madame; but how could I be so bold as to invite myself to supper with worthy persons whom I do not know and who have not the slightest knowledge of me?"

"Oh, dear me! What are you saying? We know everybody. You see how I treat you myself. After the performance, I shall be happy to introduce you, and the acquaintance will be made at once."

"I certainly must ask you to do me that honour, but another time."

"Whenever you like."

CHAPTER 30

ALL the Italian actors in Paris insisted upon entertaining me in order to show me their magnificence, and they all did it in a sumptuous style. Carlin Bertinazzi, who played Harlequin and was a great favourite of the Parisians, reminded me that he had already seen me thirteen years before in Padua at the time of his return from St. Petersburg with my mother. He offered me an excellent dinner at the house of Madame de la Caillerie, where he lodged. That lady was in love with him. I complimented her upon four charming children whom I saw in the house. Her husband, who was present, said to me, "They are M. Carlin's children."

"That may be, sir, but you take care of them, and, as they go by your name, of course they will acknowledge you as their father."

"Yes, I should be so legally; but M. Carlin is too honourable a man not to assume the care of his children whenever I may wish to get rid of them. He is well aware that they belong to him, and my wife would be the first to complain if he ever denied it."

The man was not what is called a good, easy fellow, far from it; but he took the matter in a philosophical way and spoke of it with calm, and even with a sort of dignity. He was attached to Carlin by a warm friendship, and such things were then very common in Paris amongst people of a certain class. Two noblemen, Boufflers and Luxembourg, had made a friendly exchange of wives, and each had children by the other's wife. The Boufflers children were called Luxembourg, and the Luxembourg children were called Boufflers. The descendants of those tiercelets are even now known in France under those names.

Well, those who were in the secret of that domestic comedy laughed as a matter of course, and it did not prevent the earth from moving according to the laws of gravitation.

The most wealthy of the Italian comedians in Paris was Pantaloon, the father of Coraline and Camille and a well known usurer. He also invited me to dine with his family and I was delighted with his two daughters. The eldest, Coraline, was kept by the Prince of Monaco, son of the Duke of Valentinois, who was still alive; and Camille was enamoured of the Count of Melfort, the favourite of the Duchess of Chartres, who had just become Duchess of Orleans by the death of her father-in-law.

Coraline was not so sprightly as Camille, but she was prettier. I began to make love to her as a young man of no consequence and at hours which I thought would not attract attention; but all hours belong by right to the established lover, and I therefore found myself sometimes with her when the Prince of Monaco called to see her. At first I would bow to the prince and withdraw, but afterwards I was asked to remain, for, as a general thing, princes find a *tête-à-tête* with their mistresses rather wearisome. Therefore we used to sup together, and they both listened, while it was my province to eat and relate stories.

I bethought myself of paying my court to the prince, and he received my advances very well. One morning, as I called on Coraline, he said to me, "Ah, I am very glad to see you, for I have promised the Duchess of Rufé to present you to her, and we can go to her immediately."

Another duchess! My star is decidedly in the ascendant. Well, let us go! We got into a *diable*, a sort of vehicle then very fashionable, and at eleven o'clock in the morning we were introduced to the duchess.

Dear reader, if I were to paint it with a faithful pen, my portrait of that lustful vixen would frighten you. Imagine sixty winters heaped upon a face plastered with rouge, a blotched and pimpled complexion, emaciated and gaunt features, all the ugliness of libertinism stamped upon the countenance of that creature reclining on the sofa. As soon as she sees me, she exclaims with rapid joy:

"Ah! this is a good-looking man! Prince, it is very amiable on your part to bring him to me. Come and sit near me, my fine fellow!"

I obeyed respectfully, but a noxious smell of musk, which seemed to me almost corpse-like, nearly upset me. The infamous duchess had raised herself on the sofa and exposed all the nakedness of the most disgusting bosom, which would have caused the most courageous man to draw back. The prince, pretending to have some engagement, left us, saying that he would send his carriage for me in a short time.

As soon as we were alone, the plastered skeleton thrust its arms forward, and, without giving me time to know what I was about, the creature gave me a horrible kiss, and then one of her hands began to stray with the most barefaced indecency.

I was shuddering and resisted the attempt.

"Well, well! What a baby you are!" said the disgusting Messalina. "Are you such a novice?"

"No, madame; but..."

"But what?"

"I have..."

"Oh, the villain!" she exclaimed, loosing her hold. "What was I going to expose myself to!"

I availed myself of the opportunity, snatched my hat and took to my heels, afraid lest the doorkeeper should stop me.

I took a coach and drove to Coraline's, where I related the adventure. She laughed heartily and agreed with me that the prince had played me a nasty trick. She praised the presence of mind with which I had invented an impediment, but she did not give me an opportunity of proving to her that I had deceived the duchess.

Yet I was not without hope and suspected that she did not think me sufficiently enamoured of her.

Three or four days afterwards, however, as we were supping together and alone, I told her so many things and asked her so clearly to make me happy or else to dismiss me that she gave me an appointment for the next day.

"To-morrow," she said, "the prince goes to Versailles and will not return until the day after; we will go together to the warren to hunt ferrets, and I have no doubt we shall come back to Paris pleased with one another."

"That is right."

The next day at ten o'clock we took a coach, but, as we were nearing the gate of the city, a *vis-à-vis*, with servants in a foreign livery came up to us, and the person who was in it called out, "Stop! stop!"

The person was the Chevalier de Wurtemberg, who, without deigning to cast even one glance on me, began to say sweet words to Coraline and, thrusting his head entirely out of his carriage, whispered to her. She answered him likewise in a whisper; then, taking my hand, she said to me, laughingly, "I have some important business with this prince; go to the warren alone, my dear friend, enjoy the hunt and come to me to-morrow."

And, saying those words she got out and took her seat in the *vis-à-vis*, and I found myself very much in the position of Lot's wife but not motionless.

Dear reader, if you have ever been in such a predicament, you will easily realise the rage with which I was possessed; if you have never been served in that way, so much the better for you, but it is useless for me to try to give you an idea of my anger; you would not understand me.

I was disgusted with the coach and jumped out of it, telling the driver to go to the devil. I took the first hack which happened to pass and drove straight to the house of Patu, to whom I related my adventure, almost foaming with rage. But, very far from pitying me or sharing

my anger, Patu, much wiser, laughed and said, "I wish with all my heart that the same thing might happen to me; for you are certain of possessing our beautiful Coraline the very first time you are with her."

"I would not have her, for now I despise her heartily."

"Your contempt ought to have come sooner. But, now that it is too late to discuss the matter, I offer you a compensation—a dinner at the Hôtel du Roule."

"Most decidedly yes; it is an excellent idea. Let us go."

The Hôtel du Roule was famous in Paris, and I had not been there yet. The woman who kept it had furnished the place with great elegance and always had twelve or fourteen well chosen nymphs, with all the conveniences that could be desired. Good cooking, good beds, cleanliness, solitary and beautiful groves. Her cook was an artist, and her wine-cellar excellent. Her name was Madame Paris—probably an assumed name, but it was good enough for the purpose. Protected by the police, she was far enough from Paris to be certain that those who visited her liberally appointed establishment were above the middle class. Everything was strictly regulated in her house, and every pleasure was taxed at a reasonable tariff. The prices were six francs for a breakfast with a nymph, twelve for a dinner and twice that sum to spend a whole night. I found the house even better than its reputation and by far superior to the warren.

We took a coach, and Patu said to the driver, "To Chaillot."

"I understand, your honour."

After a drive of half an hour we stopped before a gate on which could be read Hôtel du Roule.

The gate was closed. A porter, sporting long mustachios, came out through a side door and gravely examined us. He was most likely pleased with our appearance, for the gate was opened and we went in. A woman, blind of one eye, about forty years old but with a remnant of beauty, came up, saluted us politely and inquired whether we wished to have dinner. Our answer being affirmative, she took us to a fine room in which we found fourteen young women, all very handsome and dressed alike in muslin. As we entered the room, they rose and made us a graceful reverence; they were all about the same age, some with light hair, some with dark; every taste could be satisfied. We passed them in review, addressing a few words to each, and made our choice. The two we chose screamed for joy, kissed us with a voluptuousness which a novice might have mistaken for love, and took us to the garden until dinner would be ready. That garden was very large and artistically arranged to minister to the pleasures of love. Madame Paris said to us, "Go, gentlemen, enjoy the fresh air with perfect security in every way; my house is the temple of peace and good health."

The girl I had chosen was something like Coraline, and that made me find her delightful. But in the midst of our amorous occupations we were called to dinner. We were well served, and the dinner had given us new strength, when our single-eyed hostess came, watch in hand,

to announce that time was up. Pleasure at the Hôtel du Roule was measured by the hour.

I whispered to Patu, and after a few philosophical considerations, addressing himself to *madame la gouvernante*, he said to her, "We will have a double dose and, of course, pay double."

"You are quite welcome, gentlemen."

We went upstairs and, after we had made our choice a second time, renewed our promenade in the garden. But once more we were disagreeably surprised by the strict punctuality of the lady of the house. "Indeed! this is too much of a good thing, madame."

"Let us go up for the third time, make a third choice and pass the whole night here."

"A delightful idea, which I accept with all my heart."

"Does Madame Paris approve our plan?"

"I could not have devised a better one, gentlemen; it is a masterpiece."

When we were in the room and had made a new choice, the girls laughed at the first ones, who had not contrived to captivate us, and by way of revenge these girls told their companions that we were lanky fellows.

This time I was indeed astonished at my own choice. I had taken a true Aspasia and thanked my stars that I had passed her by the first two times, as I had now the certainty of possessing her for fourteen hours. That beauty's name was Saint Hilaire; and under that name she became famous in England, where she followed a rich lord the year after. At first, vexed because I had not remarked her before, she was proud and disdainful; but I soon proved to her that it was fortunate that my first or second choice had not fallen on her, as she would now remain longer with me. She then began to laugh and showed herself very agreeable.

That girl had wit, education and talent—everything, in fact, that is needful to succeed in the profession she had adopted. During the supper Patu told me in Italian that he was on the point of taking her at the very moment I chose her, and the next morning he informed me that he had slept quietly all night. La Saint Hilaire was highly pleased with me and boasted of it before her companions. She was the cause of my paying several visits to the Hôtel du Roule, and all for her; she was very proud of my constancy.

Those visits very naturally cooled my ardour for Coraline. A singer from Venice called Guadagni, handsome, a thorough musician and very witty, contrived to captivate her affections three weeks after my quarrel with her. The handsome fellow, who was a man only in appearance, inflamed her curiosity, and caused a rupture with the prince, who caught her in the very act. But Coraline managed to coax him back, and a short time after a reconciliation took place between them—and such a good one that a babe was the consequence of it, a girl, whom the prince named Adelaide and to whom he gave a dowry. After the death of his father, the Duke of Valentinois, the prince left her alto-

gether and married Mlle. de Brignole, from Genoa. Coraline became the mistress of Count de la Marche, now Prince de Conti. Coraline is now dead, as well as a son whom she had by the count and whom his father named Count de Monréal.

Madame la Dauphine was delivered of a princess, who received the title of Madame de France.

In the month of August the Royal Academy had an exhibition at the Louvre, and, as there was not a single battle piece I conceived the idea of summoning my brother to Paris. He was then in Venice and had great talent in that particular style. Paceselli, the only painter of battles known in France, was dead, and I thought François might succeed and make a fortune. I therefore wrote to M. Grimani and to my brother; I persuaded them both, but François did not come to Paris till the beginning of the following year.

Louis XV, who was passionately fond of hunting, was in the habit of spending six weeks every year at the Château de Fontainebleau. He always returned to Versailles towards the middle of November. That trip cost him—or, rather, cost France—five millions of francs. He always took with him all that could contribute to the amusement of the foreign ambassadors and his numerous court. He was followed by the French and the Italian comedians and by the actors and actresses of the opera.

During those six weeks Fontainebleau was more brilliant than Versailles; nevertheless, the artists attached to the theatres were so numerous that the Opera, the French and Italian Comedies remained open in Paris.

Baletti's father, who had recovered his health, was to go to Fontainebleau with Silvia and all his family. They invited me to accompany them and to accept a lodging in a house hired for them.

It was a splendid opportunity; they were my friends, and I accepted, for I could not have met with a better occasion to see the court and all the foreign ministers. I presented myself to M. de Morosini, now Procurator at St. Mark's and then ambassador from the Republic to the French court.

The first night of the opera he gave me permission to accompany him; the music was by Lulli. I had a seat in the pit precisely under the private box of Madame de Pompadour, whom I did not know. During the first scene the celebrated Le Maur gave a scream so shrill and so unexpected that I thought she had gone mad. I burst into a genuine laugh, not supposing that anyone could possibly find fault with that. But a knight of the Order of the Holy Ghost, who was near the Marquise de Pompadour, dryly asked me what country I came from. I answered, in the same tone, "From Venice."

"I have been there and have laughed heartily at the recitative in your operas."

"I believe you, sir, and I feel certain that no one ever thought of objecting to your laughing."

My answer, rather a sharp one, made Madame de Pompadour laugh, and she asked me whether I truly came from down there.

"What do you mean by 'down there'?"

"I mean Venice."

"Venice, madame, is not 'down there,' but up there."

That answer was found more singular than the first, and everybody in the box held a consultation in order to ascertain whether Venice was *down* or *up*. Most likely they thought I was right, for I was left alone. Nevertheless, I listened to the opera without laughing; but as I had a very bad cold I blew my nose often. The same gentleman, addressing himself again to me, remarked that very likely the windows of my room did not close well. That gentleman, who was unknown to me, was the Maréchal de Richelieu. I told him he was mistaken, for my windows were well *calfoutrées*. Everyone in the box burst into a loud laugh, and I felt mortified, for I knew my mistake; I ought to have said *calfeutrées*. But these *eu's* and *ou's* cause dire misery to all foreigners.

Half an hour afterwards M. de Richelieu asked me which of the two actresses pleased me most by her beauty.

"That one, sir."

"But she has ugly legs."

"They are not seen, sir; besides, whenever I examine the beauty of a woman, *la première chose que j'écarte, ce sont les jambes*."

That word said quite by chance and the double meaning of which I did not understand, made at once an important personage of me, and everybody in the box of Madame de Pompadour was curious to know me. The marshal learned who I was from M. de Morosini, who told me that the duke would be happy to receive me. My *jeu de mots* became celebrated, and the marshal honoured me with a very gracious welcome. Among the foreign ministers, the one to whom I attached myself most was Lord Keith, Marshal of Scotland and ambassador of the King of Prussia. I shall have occasion to speak of him.

The day after my arrival in Fontainebleau I went alone to the court and saw Louis XV, the handsome king, go to the chapel with the royal family and all the ladies of the court, who surprised me by their ugliness as much as the ladies of the court of Turin had astonished me by their beauty. Yet in the midst of so many ugly ones I found out a regular beauty. I enquired who she was.

"She is," answered one of my neighbours, "Madame de Brionne, more remarkable for her virtue even than her beauty. Not only is there no scandalous story told about her, but she has never given any opportunity to scandalmongers of inventing any adventure of which she was the heroine."

"Perhaps her adventures are not known."

"Ah, monsieur! at the court everything is known."

I went about alone, sauntering through the apartments, when suddenly I met a dozen ugly ladies who seemed to be running, rather than walking; they were standing so badly upon their legs that they appeared as if they would fall forward on their faces. Some gentleman

happening to be near me, curiosity impelled me to enquire where they were coming from and where they were going in such haste.

"They are coming from the apartment of the Queen, who is going to dine, and the reason why they walk so badly is that their shoes have heels six inches high, which compel them to walk on their toes and with bent knees in order to avoid falling on their faces."

"But why do they not wear lower heels?"

"It is the fashion!"

"What a stupid fashion!"

I took a gallery at random and saw the King passing along, leaning with one arm on the shoulder of M. d'Argenson. "Oh, base servility!" I thought to myself. "How can a man make up his mind thus to bear the yoke, and how can a man believe himself so much above all others as to take such unwarrantable liberties?"

Louis XV had the most magnificent head it was possible to see, and he carried it with as much grace as majesty. Never did even the most skilful painter succeed in rendering justice to the expression of that beautiful head when the King turned it on one side to look with kindness at anyone. His beauty and grace compelled love at once. As I saw him, I thought I had found the ideal majesty which I had been so surprised not to find in the King of Sardinia, and I could not entertain a doubt of Madame de Pompadour having been in love with the King when she sued for his royal attention. I was greatly mistaken, perhaps, but such a thought was natural in looking at the countenance of Louis XV.

I reached a splendid room, in which I saw several courtiers walking about and a table large enough for twelve persons but laid out for only one.

"For whom is this table?"

"For the Queen. Her Majesty is now coming in."

It was the Queen of France, without rouge and very simply dressed; her head was covered with a large cap; she looked old and devout. When she was near the table, she graciously thanked two nuns who were placing a plate with fresh butter on it. She sat down, and immediately the courtiers formed a semicircle within five yards of the table; I remained near them, imitating their respectful silence.

Her Majesty began to eat without looking at anyone, keeping her eyes on her plate. One of the dishes being to her taste, she desired to be helped to it a second time and then cast her eyes round the circle of courtiers, probably in order to see if among them there was anyone to whom she owed an account of her daintiness. She found the person, I suppose, for she said, "Monsieur de Löwendal!"

At that name a fine-looking man came forward with a respectful inclination and said, "Your Majesty?"

"I believe this is a fricassee of chicken."

"I am of the same opinion, madame."

After this answer, given in the most serious tone, the Queen continued eating, and the marshal retreated backward to his original place. The

Queen finished her dinner without uttering a single word and retired to her apartments the same way as she had come. I thought that, if such was the way the Queen of France took all her meals, I would not sue for the honour of being her guest.

I was delighted to have seen the famous captain who had conquered Bergen-op-Zoom, but I regretted that such a man should be compelled to give an answer about a fricassee of chicken in the serious tone of a judge pronouncing a sentence of death.

I made good use of this anecdote at the excellent dinner Silvia gave to the *élite* of polite and agreeable society.

A few days afterwards, as I was forming a line with a crowd of courtiers to enjoy the ever new pleasure of seeing the King go to mass, a pleasure to which must be added the advantage of looking at the naked and entirely exposed arms and bosoms of Mesdames de France, his daughters, I suddenly perceived Cavamacchia, whom I had left in Cesena under the name of Madame Querini. If I was astonished to see her, she was as much so in meeting me in such a place. The Marquis of Saint-Simon, *premier gentilhomme* of the Prince de Condé, escorted her.

"Madame Querini in Fontainebleau?"

"You here? It reminds me of Queen Elizabeth saying: *Pauper ubique jacet.*"

"An excellent comparison, madame."

"I am only joking, my dear friend; I am here to see the King, who does not know me; but to-morrow the ambassador will present me to His Majesty."

She placed herself in the line within a yard or two from me, beside the door by which the King was to come. His Majesty entered the gallery with M. de Richelieu and looked at the so-called Madame Querini. But she very likely did not take his fancy, for, continuing to walk on, he addressed to the marshal these remarkable words, which Juliette must have overheard, "We have handsomer women here."

In the afternoon I called upon the Venetian ambassador. I found him in numerous company, with Madame Querini sitting on his right. She addressed me in the most flattering and friendly manner; it was extraordinary conduct on the part of a giddy woman who had no cause to like me, for she was aware that I knew her thoroughly and had mastered her vanity; but, as I understood her manoeuvring, I made up my mind not to disoblige her and even to render her all the good offices I could; it was a noble revenge.

As she was speaking of M. Querini, the ambassador congratulated her upon her marriage with him, saying that he was glad M. Querini had rendered justice to her merit, and adding, "I was not aware of your marriage."

"Yet it took place more than two years ago," said Juliette.

"I know it for a fact," I said in my turn, "for two years ago the lady was introduced as Madame Querini and with the title of 'Ex-

cellency' by General Spada to all the nobility in Cesena, where I was at that time."

"I have no doubt of it," answered the ambassador, fixing his eyes upon me, "for Querini himself wrote to me on the subject."

A few minutes afterwards, as I was preparing to take my leave, the ambassador, under pretence of some letters, the contents of which he wished to communicate to me, invited me to come into his private room and asked me what people generally thought of the marriage in Venice.

"Nobody knows it, and it is even rumoured that the heir of the house of Querini is on the point of marrying a daughter of the Grimani family, but I shall certainly send the news to Venice."

"What news?"

"That Juliette is truly Madame Querini, since Your Excellency will present her as such to Louis XV."

"Who told you so?"

"She did."

"Perhaps she has altered her mind."

I repeated to the ambassador the words which the King had said to M. de Richelieu after looking at Juliette.

"Then I can guess," remarked the ambassador, "why Juliette does not wish to be presented to the King."

I was informed some time afterwards that M. de Saint-Quentin, the King's confidential minister, had called after mass on the handsome Venetian and had told her that the King of France had most certainly very bad taste because he had not thought her beauty superior to that of several ladies of his court. Juliette left Fontainebleau the next morning.

In the first part of my *Memoirs* I have spoken of Juliette's beauty; she had a wonderful charm in her countenance, but she had already used her advantages too long, and her beauty was beginning to fade when she arrived in Fontainebleau.

I met her again in Paris at the ambassador's, and she told me with a laugh that she had only been jesting when she called herself Madame Querini and that I would oblige her if in future I would call her by her real name of Countess Preati. She invited me to visit her at the Hôtel de Luxembourg, where she was staying. I often called on her, for her intrigues amused me, but I was wise enough not to meddle with them.

She remained in Paris four months and contrived to infatuate M. Zanchi, secretary of the Venetian Embassy, an amiable and learned man. He was so deeply in love that he had made up his mind to marry her; but through a caprice which she perhaps regretted afterwards, she ill-treated him, and the fool died of grief. Count de Kaunitz, ambassador of Maria Theresa, had some inclination for her, as well as the Count of Zinzendorf. The person who arranged these transient and short-lived intrigues was a certain Guasco, an abbé not over-favoured with the gifts of Plutus. He was particularly ugly and had to purchase small favours with great services.

But the man whom she really wished to marry was Count Saint-Simon. He would have married her if she had not given him false addresses to make enquiries respecting her birth. The Preati family of Verona denied all knowledge of her, as a matter of course, and M. de Saint-Simon, who, in spite of all his love, had not entirely lost his senses, had the courage to abandon her. Altogether, Paris did not prove an El Dorado for my handsome countrywoman, for she was obliged to pledge her diamonds and leave them behind her. After her return to Venice she married the son of the Uccelli, who sixteen years before had taken her out of her poverty. She died ten years ago.

I was still taking my French lessons with my good old Crébillon; yet my style, which was full of Italianisms, often expressed the very reverse of what I meant to say. But generally my *quid-pro-quo's* only resulted in curious jokes which made my fortune; and the best of it is that my gibberish did me no harm on the score of wit; on the contrary, it procured me fine acquaintances.

Several ladies of the best society begged me to teach them Italian, saying that it would afford them the opportunity of teaching me French; in such an exchange I always won more than they did.

Madame Préodot, who was one of my pupils, received me one morning; she was still in bed and told me that she did not feel disposed to have a lesson because she had taken medicine the night previous. Foolishly translating an Italian idiom, I asked her, with an air of deep interest, whether she had well *déchargé*?

"Sir, what a question! You are unbearable."

I repeated my question; she broke out angrily again, "Never utter that dreadful word."

"You are wrong in getting angry; it is the proper word."

"A very dirty word, sir; but enough about that. Will you have some breakfast?"

"No, I thank you. I have taken a *café* and two savoyards."

"Dear me! What a ferocious breakfast! Pray explain yourself."

"I say that I have drunk a *café* and eaten two savoyards soaked in it, and that is what I do every morning."

"You are stupid, my good friend. A *café* is the establishment in which coffee is sold, and you ought to say that you have drunk *une tasse de café*."

"Good indeed! Do you drink the cup? In Italy we say a *caffè*, and we are not foolish enough to suppose that it means the coffee-house."

"He will have the best of it! And the two Savoyards, how did you swallow them?"

"Soaked in my coffee, for they were not larger than these on your table."

"And you call these savoyards? Say '*biscuits*'."

"In Italy, we call them savoyards because they were first invented in Savoy; and it is not my fault if you imagined that I had swallowed two of the porters to be found at the corner of the streets—big fellows

whom you call in Paris, Savoyards, although very often they have never been in Savoy."

Her husband came in at that moment, and she lost no time in relating the whole of our conversation. He laughed heartily but said I was right. Her niece arrived a few minutes after; she was a young girl about fourteen years of age, reserved, modest and very intelligent. I had given her five or six lessons in Italian, and, as she was very fond of that language and studied diligently she was beginning to speak it.

Wishing to pay me her compliments in Italian, she said to me, "*Signore, sono incantata di vi vedere in buona salute.*"

"I thank you, mademoiselle; but to translate 'I am enchanted', you must say *ho piacere*, and for 'to see you', you must say *di vedervi*."

"I thought, sir, that the *vi* was to be placed before."

"No, mademoiselle, we always put it on the behind."

Monsieur and Madame Préodot were dying with laughter; the young lady was embarrassed, and I in despair at having uttered such a gross absurdity, but it could not be helped. I took a book sulkily, in the hope of putting a stop to their mirth, but it was of no use; it lasted a week. That uncouth blunder soon got known throughout Paris and gave me a sort of reputation which I lost little by little, but only when I understood the double meanings of words better. Crébillon was much amused with my blunder and told me that I ought to have said "after" instead of "on the behind." Ah! why have not all languages the same genius! But, if the French laughed at my mistakes in speaking their language, I took my revenge amply by turning some of their idioms to ridicule.

"Sir," I once said to a gentleman, "how is your wife?"

"You do her great honour, sir."

"Pray tell me, sir, what her honour has to do with her health?"

I meet in the Bois de Boulogne a young man riding a horse which he cannot master, and at last he is thrown. I stop the horse, run to the assistance of the young man and help him up.

"Did you hurt yourself, sir?"

"Oh, many thanks, sir, *au contraire*."

"Why '*au contraire*'? The deuce! It has done you good? Then begin again, sir."

And a thousand similar expressions entirely the reverse of good sense. But it is the genius of the language.

I was one day paying my first visit to the wife of *le Président N—*, when her nephew, a brilliant butterfly, came in, and she introduced me to him, mentioning my name and my country.

"Indeed, sir, you are Italian?" said the young man. "Upon my word, you present yourself so gracefully that I would have bet you were French."

"Sir, when I saw you, I was near making the same mistake; I would have bet you were Italian."

Another time, I was dining at Lady Lambert's in numerous and brilliant company. Someone remarked on my finger a cornelian ring on which was engraved very beautifully the head of Louis XV. My

ring went round the table, and everybody thought that the likeness was striking.

A young marquise, who had the reputation of being a great wit, said to me in the most serious tone, "It is truly an antique?"

"The stone, madame, undoubtedly."

Everyone laughed except the thoughtless young beauty, who did not take any notice of it. Towards the end of the dinner someone spoke of the rhinoceros, which was then being shown for twenty-four sous at the fair of St. Germain.

"Let us go and see it!" was the cry.

We got into the carriages and reached the fair. We took several turns before we could find the place. I was the only gentleman; I was taking care of two ladies in the midst of the crowd, and the witty marquise was walking in front of us. At the end of the alley where we had been told we would find the animal, there was a man placed to receive the money of the visitors. It is true that the man, dressed in the African fashion, was very dark and enormously stout, yet he had a human and very masculine form, and the beautiful marquise had no business to make a mistake. Nevertheless, the thoughtless young creature went straight up to him and said, "Are you the rhinoceros?"

"Go in, madame, go in."

We were dying with laughing, and the marquise, when she had seen the animal, thought herself bound to apologise to the master, assuring him that she had never seen a rhinoceros in her life and therefore he could not feel offended if she had made a mistake.

One evening I was in the foyer of the Italian Comedy, where between the acts the highest noblemen were in the habit of coming in order to converse and joke with the actresses who used to sit there waiting for their turn to appear on the stage, and I was seated near Camille, Coraline's sister, whom I was amusing by making love to her. A young councillor, who objected to my occupying Camille's attention, being a very conceited fellow, attacked me upon some remark I made respecting an Italian play, and took the liberty of showing his bad temper by criticising my native country. I was answering him in an indirect way, looking all the time at Camille, who was laughing. Everybody had congregated around us and was attentive to the discussion, which, being carried on as an assault of wit, had nothing to make it unpleasant. But it seemed to take a serious turn when the young fop, turning the conversation on the police of the city, said that for some time it had been dangerous to walk alone at night through the streets of Paris.

"During the last month," he added, "the Place de Grève has seen the hanging of seven men, among whom there were five Italians. An extraordinary circumstance."

"Nothing extraordinary in that," I answered; "honest men generally contrive to be hung far away from their native country; and as a proof of it, sixty Frenchmen have been hanged in the course of

the last year between Naples, Rome and Venice. Five times twelve are sixty; so you see that it is only a fair exchange."

The laughter was all on my side, and the fine councillor went away rather crestfallen. One of the gentlemen present at the discussion, finding my answer to his taste, came up to Camille and asked her in a whisper who I was. We got acquainted at once.

It was M. de Marigny, whom I was delighted to know for the sake of my brother, whose arrival in Paris I was expecting every day. M. de Marigny was superintendent of the royal buildings, and the Academy of Painting was under his jurisdiction. I mentioned my brother to him, and he graciously promised to protect him. Another young nobleman, who conversed with me, invited me to visit him. It was the Duke de Matalona.

I told him that I had seen him, then only a child, eight years before in Naples, and that I was under great obligations to his uncle, Don Lelio. The young duke was delighted, and we became intimate friends.

My brother arrived in Paris in the spring of 1751 and lodged with me at Madame Quinson's. He began at once to work with success for private individuals; but, his main idea being to compose a picture to be submitted to the judgment of the Academy, I introduced him to M. de Marigny, who received him with great distinction and encouraged him by assuring him of his protection. François immediately set to work with great diligence.

M. de Morosini had been recalled, and M. de Mocenigo had succeeded him as ambassador of the Republic. M. de Bragadin had recommended me to him, and he tendered a friendly welcome both to me and to my brother, in whose favour he felt interested as a Venetian and as a young artist seeking to build up a position by his talent.

M. de Mocenigo was of a very pleasant nature; he liked gambling, although he was always unlucky at cards; he loved women, and he was not more fortunate with them, because he did not know how to manage them. Two years after his arrival in Paris he fell in love with Madame de Colande and, finding it impossible to win her affections, killed himself.

Madame la Dauphine was delivered of a prince, the Duke of Burgundy, and the rejoicings indulged in at the birth of that child seem to me incredible now, when I see what the same nation is doing against the King. The people want to be free; it is a noble ambition, for mankind are not made to be the slaves of one man; but with a nation populous, great, witty and giddy, what will be the end of this revolution? Time alone can tell us.

The Duke de Matalona procured me the acquaintance of the two princes, Don Marc-Antoine and Don Jean-Baptiste Borghese, from Rome, who were enjoying themselves in Paris, yet living without display. I had occasion to remark that, when those Roman princes were presented at the court of France they were only styled "marquis." It was the same with the Russian princes, to whom the title of "prince" was refused when they wanted to be presented; they were called

"knees," but they did not mind it, because that word meant "prince." The court of France has always been foolishly particular on the question of titles, and is even now sparing of the title of "monsieur," although it is common enough everywhere; every man who was not titled was called "sieur." I have remarked that the king did not address his bishops otherwise than as abbés, although they were generally very proud of their titles. The King likewise affected to know a nobleman only when his name was inscribed amongst those who served him.

Yet the haughtiness of Louis XV had been inoculated into him by his upbringing; it was not in his nature. When an ambassador presented someone to him, the person thus presented withdrew with the certainty of having been seen by the King, but that was all. Nevertheless, Louis XV was very polite, particularly with ladies, even with his mistresses, when in public. Whoever failed in respect towards them in the slightest manner was sure of disgrace, and no king ever possessed to a greater extent the grand royal virtue which is called dissimulation. He kept a secret faithfully, and he was delighted when he knew that no one but himself possessed it.

The Chevalier d'Eon is a proof of this, for the King alone knew and had always known that the chevalier was a woman, and all the long discussions which the false chevalier had with the Office for Foreign Affairs was a comedy which the King allowed to go on only because it amused him.

Louis XV was great in all things and would have had no faults if flattery had not forced them upon him. But how could he possibly have supposed himself faulty in anything when everyone around him repeated constantly that he was the best of kings? A king, imbued with this opinion respecting his own person, naturally thought himself a being by far too superior to ordinary men for him not to have the right to consider himself akin to a god. Sad destiny of kings! Vile flatterers are constantly doing everything necessary to reduce them below the condition of man.

The Princess of Ardore was delivered about that time of a young prince. Her husband, the Neapolitan ambassador, entreated Louis XV to be godfather to the child; the King consented and presented his godson with a regiment; but the mother, who did not like a military career for her son, refused it. The Marshal de Richelieu told me that he had never known the King to laugh so heartily as when he heard of that singular refusal.

At the Duchesse de Fulvie's I made the acquaintance of Mlle. Gaussin, who was called Lolotte. She was the mistress of Lord Albemarle, the English ambassador, a witty and very generous nobleman. One evening he complained of his mistress praising the beauty of the stars which were shining brightly over her head, saying that she ought to know he could not give them to her. If Lord Albemarle had been ambassador to the court of France at the time of the rupture between France and England, he would have arranged all difficulties amicably, and the unfortunate war by which France lost Canada would not

have taken place. There is no doubt that the harmony between two nations depends very often upon their respective ambassadors when there is any danger of a rupture. As to the noble lord's mistress, there was but one opinion respecting her. She was fit in every way to become his wife, and the highest families of France did not think that she needed the title of Lady Albemarle to be received with distinction; no lady considered it debasing to sit near her, although she was well known as the mistress of the English lord. She had passed from her mother's arms to those of Lord Albemarle at the age of thirteen, and her conduct was always of the highest respectability. She bore children whom the ambassador acknowledged legally, and she died Countess d'Eronville. I shall have to mention her again in my *Memoirs*.

I had likewise occasion to become acquainted at the Venetian Embassy with a lady from Venice, the widow of an English baronet named Wynne. She had just come with her children from London, where she had been compelled to go in order to insure them the inheritance of their late father, which they would have lost if they had not declared themselves members of the Church of England. She was on her way back to Venice, much pleased with her journey. She was accompanied by her eldest daughter, a young girl of twelve years, who, notwithstanding her youth, carried on her beautiful face all the signs of perfection. She is now living in Venice, the widow of Count de Rosenberg, who died in Venice, ambassador of the Empress-Queen Maria Theresa. She is surrounded by the brilliant halo of her excellent conduct and all her social virtues. No one can accuse her of any fault except that of being poor, but she feels it only because it does not allow her to be as charitable as she might wish.

The reader will see in the next chapter how I managed to embroil myself with the French police.

CHAPTER 31

THE youngest daughter of my landlady, Mlle. Quinson, a young girl between fifteen and sixteen years of age, was in the habit of coming often to my room without being called. It was not long before I discovered that she was in love with me, and I should have thought myself ridiculous if I had been cruel to a young brunette who was piquant, lively, amiable, and had a most delightful voice.

During the first four or five months nothing but childish trifles took place between us; but one night, coming home very late and finding her fast asleep on my bed, I did not see the necessity of waking her up, and, undressing, I lay down beside her. She left me at day-break.

Mimi had not been gone three hours when a milliner came with a charming young girl, to invite herself and her friend to breakfast; I thought the young girl well worth a breakfast, but I was tired and wanted rest and begged them both to withdraw. Soon after they had

left me, Madame Quinson came with her daughter to make my bed. I put my dressing-gown on and began to write.

"Ah! the nasty hussies!" exclaims the mother.

"What is the matter, madame?"

"The riddle is clear enough, sir; see how these sheets are spoiled!"

"I am very sorry, my dear madame; but change them, and the evil will be remedied at once."

She went out of the room, threatening and grumbling, "Let them come again, and see if I don't take care of them!"

Mimi remained alone with me, and I addressed her some reproaches for her imprudence. But she laughed and answered that Love had sent those women on purpose to protect Innocence! After that Mimi was no longer under any restraint; she would come and share my bed whenever she had a fancy to do so, unless I sent her back to her own room, and in the morning she always left me in good time. But at the end of four months my beauty informed me that our secret would soon be discovered.

"I am very sorry," I said to her, "but I cannot help it."

"We ought to think of something."

"Well, do so."

"What can I think of? Well, come what will, the best thing I can do is not to think of it."

Towards the sixth month she had become so large that her mother, no longer doubting the truth, got into a violent passion and by dint of blows compelled her to name the father. Mimi said I was the guilty swain, and perhaps it was not an untruth.

With that great discovery Madame Quinson burst into my room in high dudgeon. She threw herself on a chair and, when she had recovered her breath, loaded me with insulting words and ended by telling me that I must marry her daughter. At this intimation, understanding her object and wishing to cut the matter short, I told her that I was already married in Italy.

"Then why did you come here and get my daughter with child?"

"I can assure you that I did not mean to do so. Besides, how do you know that I am the father of the child?"

"Mimi says so, and she is certain of it."

"I congratulate her; but I warn you, madame, that I am ready to swear that I have no certainty about it."

"What then?"

"Then nothing. If she is pregnant, she will be confined." The mother went downstairs, uttering curses and threats; the next day I was summoned before the commissary of the district. I obeyed the summons and found Madame Quinson fully equipped for the battle. The commissary, after the preliminary questions usual in all legal cases, asked me whether I admitted myself guilty towards the girl Quinson of the injury of which the mother, there present personally, complained.

"*Monsieur le Commissaire*, I beg of you to write word by word the answer which I am going to give you."

"Very well."

"I have caused no injury whatever to Mimi, the plaintiff's daughter, and I refer you to the girl herself, who has always had as much friendship for me as I have had for her."

"But she declares that she is pregnant from your doings."

"That may be, but it is not certain."

"She says it is certain, and she swears that she has never known any other man."

"If it is so, she is unfortunate; for in such a question a man cannot trust any woman but his own wife."

"What did you give her in order to seduce her?"

"Nothing; for, very far from my having seduced her, she has seduced me, and we agreed perfectly in one moment; a pretty woman does not find it very hard to seduce me."

"Was she a virgin?"

"I never felt any curiosity about that either before or after; therefore, sir, I do not know."

"Her mother claims reparation, and the law is against you."

"I can give no reparation to the mother; and, as for the law, I will obey it when it has been explained to me and I am convinced that I have been guilty against it."

"You are already convinced. Do you imagine that a man who gets an honest girl with child in a house of which he is an inmate does not transgress the laws of society?"

"I admit that to be the case when the mother is deceived; but, when that same mother sends her daughter to the room of a young man, are we not right in supposing that she is disposed to accept peacefully all the accidents which may result from such conduct?"

"She sent her daughter to your room only to wait on you."

"And she has waited on me as I have waited on her; if she sends her to my room this evening and it is agreeable to Mimi, I will certainly serve her as well as I can; but I will have nothing to do with her against her will or out of my room, the rent of which I have always paid punctually."

"You may say what you like, but you must pay the fine."

"I will say what I believe to be just, and I will pay nothing; for there can be no fine where there is no law transgressed. If I am sentenced to pay, I shall appeal even to the last jurisdiction and until I obtain justice, for believe me, sir, I know that I am not such an awkward and cowardly fellow as to refuse my caresses to a pretty woman who pleases me and who comes to provoke them in my own room, especially when I feel myself certain of the mother's agreement."

I signed the interrogatory after I had read it carefully, and went away. The next day the lieutenant of police sent for me, and, after he had heard me as well as the mother and the daughter, he acquitted me and condemned Madame Quinson in costs. But I could not after all resist the tears of Mimi and her entreaties for me to defray the expenses of her confinement. She was delivered of a boy, who was sent to the

Hôtel-Dieu, to be brought up at the nation's expense. Soon afterwards Mimi ran away from her mother's house and appeared on the stage at St. Laurent's Fair. Being unknown, she had no difficulty in finding a lover who took her for a maiden. I found her very pretty on the stage.

"I did not know," I said to her, "that you were a musician."

"I am a musician about as much as all my companions, not one of whom knows a note of music. The girls at the opera are not much more clever, and in spite of that, with a good voice and some taste, one can sing delightfully."

I advised her to invite Patu to supper, and he was charmed with her. Some time afterwards, however, she came to a bad end and disappeared.

The Italian comedians obtained at that time permission to perform parodies of operas and tragedies. I made the acquaintance at that theatre of the celebrated Chantilly, who had been the mistress of the Maréchal de Saxe and was called Favart because the poet of that name had married her. She sang the part of Tonton in the parody of *Thétis et Pelée*, by M. de Fontenelle, amidst deafening applause. Her grace and talent won the love of a man of the greatest merit, the Abbé de Voisenon, with whom I was as intimate as with Crébillon. All the plays performed at the Italian Comedy, under the name of Madame Favart, were written by the abbé, who became a member of the Academy after my departure from Paris. I cultivated an acquaintance the value of which I could appreciate, and he honoured me with his friendship. It was at my suggestion that the Abbé de Voisenon conceived the idea of composing oratorios in poetry; they were sung for the first time at the Tuileries when the theatres were closed in consequence of some religious festival. That amiable abbé, who had written several comedies in secret, had very poor health and a very small body; he was all wit and gracefulness, famous for his shrewd repartees, which, although very cutting, never offended anyone. It was impossible for him to have any enemies, for his criticism only grazed the skin and never wounded deeply. One day, as he was returning from Versailles, I asked him the news of the court.

"The King is yawning," he answered, "because he must come to the parliament to-morrow to hold a bed of justice."

"Why is it called a bed of justice?"

"I do not know, unless it is because justice is asleep during the proceedings."

I afterwards met in Prague the living portrait of that eminent writer in Count François Hardig, now plenipotentiary of the Emperor at the court of Saxony.

The Abbé de Voisenon introduced me to Fontenelle, who was then ninety-three years of age. A fine wit, an amiable and learned man, celebrated for his quick repartees, Fontenelle could not pay a compliment without throwing kindness and wit into it. I told him I had come from Italy on purpose to see him.

"Confess, sir," he said to me, "that you have kept me waiting a very long time."

This repartee was obliging and critical at the same time, and pointed out in a delicate and witty manner the untruth of my compliment. He made me a present of his works and asked me if I liked the French plays; I told him I had seen *Thétis et Pelée* at the opera. That play was his own composition, and, when I had praised it, he told me that it was *à tête pelée*.

"I was at the Théâtre Française last night," I said, "and saw *Athalie*."

"It is the masterpiece of Racine; Voltaire was wrong in accusing me of having criticised that tragedy and in attributing to me an epigram the author of which has never been known and which ends with two very poor lines:

*Pour avoir fait pis qu'Esther,
Comment diable as-tu pu faire?"*

I have been told that M. de Fontenelle had been the tender friend of Madame du Tencin, that M. d'Alembert was the offspring of their intimacy and that Le Rond had been only his foster-father. I met d'Alembert at Madame de Graffigny's. That great philosopher had the talent of never appearing to be a learned man when he was in the company of amiable persons who had no pretension to learning or the sciences, and he always seemed to endow with intelligence those who conversed with him.

When I went to Paris for the second time, after my escape from The Leads of Venice, I was delighted at the idea of seeing again the amiable, venerable Fontenelle, but he died a fortnight after my arrival, at the beginning of the year 1757.

When I paid my third visit to Paris, with the intention of ending my days in that capital, I reckoned upon the friendship of M. d'Alembert, but he died, like Fontenelle, a fortnight after my arrival, towards the end of 1783. Now I feel that I have seen Paris and France for the last time. The popular effervescence has disgusted me, and I am too old to hope to see the end of it.

Count de Looz, Polish ambassador at the French court, invited me in 1751 to translate into Italian a French opera susceptible of great transformations and of having a grand ballet annexed to the subject of the opera itself. I chose Zoroastre, by M. de Cahusac. I had to adapt words to the music of the choruses, always a difficult task. The music remained very beautiful, of course, but my Italian poetry was very poor. In spite of that, the generous sovereign sent me a splendid gold snuffbox, and I thus contrived at the same time to please my mother very highly.

It was about that time that Mlle. Vesian arrived in Paris with her brother. She was quite young, well educated, beautiful, most amiable and a novice; her brother accompanied her. Her father, formerly an officer in the French army, had died at Parma, his native city. Left an orphan without any means of support, she followed the advice given by her friends; she sold the furniture left by her father, with the intention of going to Versailles to obtain from the justice and the generosity of the

King a small pension to enable her to live. As she got out of the diligence, she took a coach and desired to be taken to some hotel close by the Italian Theatre; by the greatest chance she was brought to the Hôtel de Bourgogne, where I was then staying myself.

In the morning I was told that there were two young Italians, brother and sister, who did not appear very wealthy, in the next room to mine. Italians, young, poor and newly arrived, my curiosity was excited. I went to the door of their room, I knocked, and a young man came to open it in his shirt.

"I beg you to excuse me, sir," he said to me, "if I receive you in such a state."

"I have to ask your pardon myself. I come only to offer you my services as a countryman and as a neighbour."

A mattress on the floor told me where the young man had slept; a bed standing in a recess and hid by curtains let me guess where the sister was. I begged of her to excuse me if I had presented myself without inquiring whether she was up.

She answered without seeing me that, the journey having greatly tired her, she had slept a little later than usual, but that she would get up immediately if I would excuse her for a short time.

"I am going to my room, mademoiselle, and I will come back when you send for me; my room is next door to your own."

A quarter of an hour after, instead of being sent for, I saw a young and beautiful person enter my room; she made a modest bow, saying that she had come herself to return my visit and that her brother would follow her immediately.

I thanked her for her visit, begged her to be seated and expressed all the interest I felt for her. Her gratitude showed itself more by the tone of her voice than by her words, and, her confidence being already captivated, she told me artlessly, but not without some dignity, her short history, or, rather, her situation, and concluded by these words, "I must in the course of the day find a less expensive lodging, for I possess only six francs."

I asked her whether she had any letters of recommendation, and she drew out of her pocket a parcel of papers containing seven or eight testimonials of good conduct and honesty and a passport.

"Is this all you have, my dear countrywoman?"

"Yes. I intend to call with my brother upon the Secretary for War, and I hope he will take pity on me."

"You do not know anybody here?"

"Not one person, sir; you are the first man in France to whom I have exposed my situation."

"I am a countryman of yours, and you are recommended to me by your position as well as by your age; I wish to be your adviser if you will permit me."

"Ah, sir! how grateful I would be!"

"Do not mention it. Give me your papers; I will see what is to be done with them. Do not relate your story to anyone and do not say one

word about your position. You had better remain at this hotel. Here are two louis which I will lend you until you are in a position to return them to me."

She accepted, expressing her heartfelt gratitude.

Mlle. Vesian was an interesting brunette of sixteen. She had a good knowledge of French and Italian, graceful manners and a dignity which endowed her with a very noble appearance. She informed me of her affairs without frowardness, yet without that timidity which seems to arise from a fear of the person who listens being disposed to take advantage of the distressing position confided to his honour. She seemed neither humiliated nor bold; she had hope, and she did not boast of her courage. Her virtue was by no means ostentatious, but there was in her an air of modesty which would certainly have put a restraint upon anyone disposed to fail in respect towards her. I felt the effect of it myself, for, in spite of her beautiful eyes, her fine figure, the freshness of her complexion, her transparent skin, her *négligé*—in one word, all that can tempt a man and which filled me with burning desires—I did not for one instant lose control over myself; she had inspired me with a feeling of respect which helped me to master my senses, and I promised myself not only to attempt nothing against her virtue, but also not to be the first man to make her deviate from the right path. I even thought it better to postpone to another interview a little speech on that subject, the result of which might be to make me follow a different course.

"You are now in a city," I said to her, "in which your destiny must unfold itself and in which all the fine qualities which nature has so bountifully bestowed upon you, and which may ultimately cause your fortune, may likewise cause your ruin; for here, my dear countrywoman, wealthy men scorn all libertine women except those who have offered them the sacrifice of their virtue. If you are virtuous and determined upon remaining so, prepare yourself to bear a great deal of misery; if you feel yourself sufficiently above what is called 'prejudice,' if, in a word, you feel disposed to consent to everything in order to secure a comfortable position, be very careful not to make a mistake. Distrust altogether the sweet words which every passionate man will address to you for the sake of obtaining your favours, for, his passion once satisfied, his ardour will cool down, and you will find yourself deceived. Be wary of your adorers; they will give you abundance of counterfeit coin, but do not trust them far. As far as I am concerned, I feel certain that I shall never injure you, and I hope to be of some use to you. To reassure you entirely on my account, I will treat you as if you were my sister, for I am too young to play the part of your father, and I would not tell you all this if I did not think you a very charming person."

Her brother joined us as we were talking together. He was a good-looking young man of eighteen, well made but without any style about him; he spoke little, and his expression was devoid of individuality. We breakfasted together, and, having asked him as we were at table for what profession he felt an inclination, he answered that he was disposed to do anything to earn an honourable living.

"Have you any peculiar talent?"

"I write pretty well."

"That is something. When you go out, mistrust everybody; do not enter any café, and never speak to anyone in the streets. Eat your meals in your room with your sister and tell the landlady to give you a small closet to sleep in. Write something in French to-day, let me have it to-morrow morning, and we will see what can be done. As for you, mademoiselle, my books are at your disposal; I have your papers; to-morrow I may have some news to tell you; we shall not see each other again to-day, for I generally come home very late."

She took a few books, made a modest reverence and told me with a charming voice that she had every confidence in me.

Feeling disposed to be useful to her, wherever I went during that day I spoke of nothing but her and her affairs; and everywhere men and women told me that, if she was pretty, she could not fail, but that at all events it would be right for her to take all necessary steps. I received a promise that the brother should be employed in some office. I thought that the best plan would be to find some influential lady who would consent to present Mlle. Vesian to M. d'Argenson, and I knew that in the meantime I could support her. I begged Silvia to mention the matter to Madame de Montconseil, who had very great influence with the Secretary of War. She promised to do so, but she wished to be acquainted with the young girl.

I returned to the hotel towards eleven o'clock and, seeing that there was a light still burning in Mlle. Vesian's room, knocked at her door. She opened it and told me that she had sat up in the hope of seeing me. I gave her an account of what I had done. I found her disposed to undertake all that was necessary and most grateful for my assistance. She spoke of her position with an air of noble indifference which she assumed in order to restrain her tears; she succeeded in keeping them back, but the moisture in her eyes proved all the efforts she was making to prevent them from falling. We had talked for two hours, and, going from one subject to another, I learned that she had never loved and that she was therefore worthy of a lover who would reward her in a proper manner for the sacrifice of her virtue. It would have been absurd to think that marriage was to be the reward of that sacrifice; the young girl had not yet made what is called "the false step," but she had none of the prudish feelings of those girls who say that they would not take such a step for all the gold in the universe—and usually give way before the slightest attack; all my young friend wanted was to dispose of herself in a proper and advantageous manner.

I could not help sighing as I listened to her very sensible remarks, considering the position in which she was placed by an adverse destiny. Her sincerity was charming to me; I was burning with desire. Lucie of Paséan came back to my memory; I recollected how deeply I had repented the mistake I had made in neglecting a sweet flower which another man, and a less worthy one, had hastened to pluck; I felt myself near a lamb which would perhaps become the prey of some greedy

wolf; and she, with her noble feelings, her careful upbringing and a candour which an impure breath would perhaps destroy forever, was surely not destined for a lot of shame. I regretted I was not rich enough to make her fortune and save her honour and her virtue. I felt that I could neither make her mine in an illegitimate way nor be her guardian angel and that, by becoming her protector, I should do her more harm than good; in a word, instead of helping her out of the unfortunate position in which she was, I should perhaps only contribute to her entire ruin. During that time I had her near me, speaking to her in a sentimental way and not uttering one single word of love; but I kissed her hand and her arm too often without coming to a resolution, without beginning a thing which would have too rapidly come to an end and which would have compelled me to keep her for myself; in that case, there would have been no longer any hope of a fortune for her, and for me no means of getting rid of her. I have loved women even to madness, but I have always loved liberty better; and, whenever I have been in danger of losing it, fate has come to my rescue.

I had remained about four hours with Mlle. Vesian, consumed by the most intense desires, and I had had strength enough to conquer them. She could not attribute my reserve to a feeling of modesty, and, not knowing why I did not show more boldness, she must have supposed that I was either ill or impotent. I left her after inviting her to dinner for the next day.

We had a pleasant dinner, and, her brother having gone out for a walk after our meal, we looked together out of the window, from which we could see all the carriages going to the Italian Comedy. I asked her whether she would like to go; she answered with a smile of delight, and we started at once.

I placed her in the amphitheatre, where I left her, telling her we would meet at the hotel at eleven o'clock. I would not remain with her in order to avoid the questions which would have been addressed to me, for, the simpler her toilette, the more interesting she looked.

After I had left the theatre, I went to sup at Silvia's and returned to the hotel. I was surprised at the sight of an elegant carriage; I inquired to whom it belonged and was told it was the carriage of a young nobleman who had supped with Mlle. Vesian. She was getting on.

The first thing next morning, as I was putting my head out of the window, I saw a hackney coach stop at the door of the hotel; a young man, well dressed in a morning costume, came out of it, and a minute after I heard him enter Mlle. Vesian's room. Courage! I had made up my mind; I affected a feeling of complete indifference in order to deceive myself.

I dressed myself to go out, and, while I was at my toilette, Vesian came in and told me that he did not like to go into his sister's room because the gentleman who had supped with her had just arrived.

"That's a matter of course," I said.

"He is rich and very handsome. He wishes to take us himself to Versailles and promises to procure some employment for me."

"I congratulate you. Who is he?"

I placed in an envelope the papers she had entrusted to me and handed them to him to return to his sister. I then went out. When I came home towards three o'clock, the landlady gave me a letter which had been left for me by Mlle. Vesian, who had left the hotel.

I went to my room, opened the letter and read the following lines:

"I return the money you lent me, with my best thanks. The Count de Narbonne feels interested in me and wishes to assist me and my brother. I shall inform you of everything, of the house where he wishes me to go and live and where he promises to supply me with all I require. Your friendship is very dear to me, and I entreat you not to forget me. My brother remains at the hotel, and my room belongs to me for the month. I have paid everything."

"Here is," said I to myself, "a second Lucie de Paséan, and I am a second time the dupe of my foolish delicacy, for I feel certain that the count will not make her happy. But I wash my hands of it all."

I went to the Théâtre Français in the evening and inquired about Narbonne. The first person I spoke to told me, "He is the son of a wealthy man, but a great libertine and up to his neck in debts."

Nice references, indeed! For a week I went to all the theatres and public places, in the hope of making the acquaintance of the count, but I could not succeed and was beginning to forget the adventure when one morning, towards eight o'clock, Vesian, calling on me, told me his sister was in her room and wished to speak to me. I followed him immediately. I found her looking unhappy and with eyes red from crying. She told her brother to go out for a walk, and, when he had gone, she spoke to me thus:

"M. de Narbonne, whom I thought an honourable man because I wanted him to be such, came to sit by me where you had left me at the theatre; he told me that my face had interested him, and he asked me who I was. I told him what I had told you. You had promised to have me in mind, but Narbonne told me he did not need your assistance, as he could act by himself. I believed him, and I have been the dupe of my confidence in him; he has deceived me; he is a villain."

The tears were choking her; I went to the window so as to let her cry without restraint; a few minutes after I came back and sat down by her.

"Tell me all, my dear Vesian; unburden your heart freely and do not think yourself guilty towards me; in reality I have been wrong more than you. Your heart would not now be a prey to sorrow if I had not been so imprudent as to leave you alone at the theatre."

"Alas, sir! do not say so; ought I to reproach you because you thought me so virtuous? Well, in a few words, the monster promised to show me every care, every attention, on condition of my giving him an undeniable proof of my affection and confidence—namely, to take a lodging without my brother in the house of a woman whom he represented as respectable. He insisted upon my brother not living with me, saying that evil-minded persons might suppose him to be my lover. I allowed myself to be persuaded. Unfortunate creature! How could I give

way without consulting you? He told me that the respectable woman to whom he would take me would accompany me to Versailles, and that he would send my brother there so that we should be both presented to the War Secretary. After our first supper he told me that he would come and fetch me in a hackney coach the next morning. He presented me with two louis and a gold watch, and I thought I could accept those presents from a young nobleman who showed so much interest in me. The woman to whom he introduced me did not seem to me as respectable as he had represented her to be. I passed one week with her without his doing anything to benefit my position. He would come, go out, return as he pleased, telling me every day that it would be the morrow, and, when the morrow came, there was always some impediment. At last, at seven o'clock this morning, the woman told me that the count was obliged to go into the country, and that a hackney coach would bring me back to the hotel, and that he would come and see me on his return. Then, affecting an air of sadness, she told me that I must give her back the watch because the count had forgotten to pay the watchmaker for it. I handed it to her immediately without saying a word, and, wrapping the little I possessed in my handkerchief, I came back here, where I arrived half an hour since."

"Do you hope to see him on his return from the country?"

"To see him again! Oh, Lord! why did I ever see him?"

She was crying bitterly, and I confess that no young girl ever moved me so deeply as she did by the expression of her grief. Pity replaced in my heart the affection I had felt for her a week before. The infamous proceedings of Narbonne disgusted me to that extent that, if I had known where to find him alone, I would immediately have compelled him to give me reparation. Of course I took good care not to ask the poor girl to give me a detailed account of her stay in the house of Narbonne's respectable procuress; I could guess even more than I wanted to know, and to insist upon that recital would have humiliated Mlle. Vesian. I could see all the infamy of the count in taking back the watch, which belonged to her as a gift and which the unhappy girl had earned but too well. I did all I could to dry her tears, and she begged me to be a father to her, assuring me that she would never again do anything to render herself unworthy of my friendship and that she would always be guided by my advice.

"Well, my dear young friend, what you must do now is to forget not only the unworthy count and his criminal conduct towards you, but also the fault of which you have been guilty. What is done cannot be undone, and the past is beyond remedy; but compose yourself and recall the air of cheerfulness which shone on your countenance a week ago. Then I could read on your face honesty, candour, good faith and the noble assurance which arouses sentiment in those who can appreciate its charm. You must let all those feelings shine again on your features, for they alone can interest honest people, and you require the general sympathy more than ever. My friendship is of little importance to you, but you may rely upon it all the more because I fancy that you have now a

claim upon it which you had not a week ago. Be quite certain, I beg, that I will not abandon you until your position is properly settled. I cannot at present tell you more, but be sure that I will have you in mind."

"Ah, my friend! if you promise to think of me, I ask for no more. Oh! unlucky creature that I am; there is not a soul in the world who thinks of me."

She was so deeply moved that she fainted away. I came to her assistance without calling anyone, and, when she had recovered her consciousness and some calm, I told her a hundred stories, true or purely imaginary, of the knavish tricks played in Paris by men who think of nothing but deceiving young girls. I told her a few amusing instances in order to make her more cheerful, and at last I told her that she ought to be thankful for what had happened to her with Narbonne because that misfortune would give her prudence in future.

During that long *tête-à-tête* I had no difficulty in abstaining from bestowing any caresses upon her; I did not even take her hand, for what I felt for her was a tender pity, and I was very happy when at the end of two hours I saw her calm and determined upon bearing misfortune like a heroine.

She suddenly rose from her seat and, looking at me with an air of modest trustfulness, said, "Are you particularly engaged in any way to-day?"

"No, my dear."

"Well, then, be good enough to take me somewhere out of Paris, to some place where I can breathe the fresh air freely; I shall then recover that appearance which you think I must have to interest in my favour those who will see me; and, if I can enjoy a quiet sleep throughout the next night, I feel I shall be happy again."

"I am grateful to you for your confidence in me. We will go out as soon as I am dressed. Your brother will return in the meantime."

"Oh, never mind my brother!"

"His presence is, on the contrary, of great importance. Recollect, my dear Vesian, you must make Narbonne ashamed of his own conduct. You must consider that, if he should happen to hear that, on the very day he abandoned you, you went into the country alone with me, he would triumph and would certainly say that he had only treated you as you deserved. But, if you go with your brother and me, your countryman, you give no occasion for slander."

"I blush not to have thought of that myself. We will wait for my brother's return."

He was not long in coming back, and, having sent for a coach, we were on the point of going when Baletti called on me. I introduced him to the young lady and invited him to join our party. He accepted, and we started. As my only purpose was to amuse Mlle. Vesian, I told the coachman to drive us to the Gros Caillou, where we had an excellent impromptu dinner, the cheerfulness of the guests making up for the deficiencies of the servants.

Vesian, feeling his head rather heavy, went out for a walk after

dinner, and I remained alone with his sister and my friend Baletti. I observed with pleasure that Baletti thought her an agreeable girl, and it gave me the idea of asking him to teach her dancing. I informed him of her position, of the reason which had brought her to Paris, of the little hope there was of her obtaining a pension from the King and of the necessity there was for her to do something to earn a living. Baletti answered that he would be happy to do anything, and, when he had examined the figure and the general conformation of the young girl, he said to her, "I will get Lani to take you for the ballet at the opera."

"Then," I said, "you must begin your lessons to-morrow. Mlle. Vesian stops at my hotel."

The young girl, full of wonder at my plan, began to laugh heartily and said:

"But can an opera dancer be extemporised like a minister of state? I can dance the minuet, and my ear is good enough to enable me to go through a quadrille; but, with the exception of that, I cannot dance one step."

"Most of the ballet girls," said Baletti, "know no more than you do."

"And how much must I ask from M. Lani? I do not think I can expect much."

"Nothing. The ballet girls are not paid."

"Then where is the advantage for me?" she said, with a sigh. "How shall I live?"

"Do not think of that. Such as you are, you will soon find ten wealthy noblemen who will dispute amongst themselves for the honour of making up for the absence of salary. You have only to make a good choice, and I am certain that it will not be long before we shall see you covered with diamonds."

"Now I understand you. You suppose some great lord will keep me?"

"Precisely; and that will be much better than a pension of four hundred francs, which you would perhaps not obtain without making the same sacrifice."

Very much surprised, she looked at me to ascertain whether I was serious or only jesting.

Baletti having left us, I told her it was truly the best thing she could do, unless she preferred the sad position of waiting-maid to some grand lady.

"I would not be the *femme de chambre* even of the Queen."

"And *figurante* at the opera?"

"Much rather."

"You are smiling?"

"Yes, for it is enough to make me laugh. I, the mistress of a rich nobleman, who will cover me with diamonds! Well, I mean to choose the oldest."

"Quite right, my dear; only do not make him jealous."

"I promise you to be faithful to him. But will he find a situation

for my brother? However, until I am at the opera, until I have met my elderly lover, who will give me the means to support myself?"

"I, my dear girl, my friend Baletti and all my friends, without other interest than the pleasure of serving you, but with the hope that you will live properly and that we shall contribute to your happiness. Are you satisfied?"

"Quite so; I have promised myself to be guided entirely by your advice, and I entreat you to remain always my best friend."

We returned to Paris at night; I left Mlle. Vesian at the hotel and accompanied Baletti to his mother's. At supper-time my friend begged Silvia to speak to M. Lani in favour of our *protégée*. Silvia said it was a much better plan than to solicit a miserable pension, which perhaps would not be granted. Then we talked of a project which was then spoken of, namely, to sell all the appointments of ballet girls and of chorus singers at the opera. There was even some idea of asking a high price for them, for it was argued that, the higher the price, the more the girls would be esteemed. Such a project, in the midst of the scandalous habits and manners of the time, had a sort of apparent wisdom, for it would have ennobled in a way a class of women who, with very few exceptions, seem to glory in being contemptible.

There were at that time at the opera several *figurantes*, singers and dancers, ugly rather than plain, without any talent, who, in spite of it all, lived in great comfort; for it is admitted that at the opera a girl must needs renounce all modesty or starve. But if a girl, newly arrived there, is clever enough to remain virtuous only for one month, her fortune is certainly made, because then the noblemen enjoying a reputation for wisdom and virtue are the only ones who seek to get hold of her. Those men are delighted to hear their names mentioned in connection with the newly arrived beauty; they even go so far as to allow her a few frolics, provided she takes pride in what they give her and provided her infidelities are not too public. Besides, it is the fashion never to go to sup with one's mistress without giving her notice of the intended visit, and everyone must admit that it is a very wise custom. I came back to the hotel towards eleven o'clock, and, seeing that Mlle. Vesian's room was still open, I went in. She was in bed.

"Let me get up," she said, "for I want to speak to you."

"Do not disturb yourself; we can talk all the same, and I think you much prettier as you are."

"I am very glad of it."

"What have you got to tell me?"

"Nothing, except to speak of the profession I am going to adopt. I am going to practice virtue in order to find a man who loves it only to destroy it."

"Quite true; but almost everything is like that in this life. Man always refers everything to himself, and everyone is a tyrant in his own way. I am pleased to see you becoming a philosopher."

"How can one become a philosopher?"

"By thinking."

"Must one think a long while?"

"Throughout life."

"Then it is never over?"

"Never; but one improves as much as possible and obtains the sum of happiness which one is susceptible of enjoying."

"And how can that happiness be felt?"

"By all the pleasures which the philosopher can procure when he is conscious of having obtained them by his own exertions, and especially by getting rid of the many prejudices which make of the majority of men a troop of grown-up children."

"What is 'pleasure'? What is meant by 'prejudices'?"

"Pleasure is the actual enjoyment of our senses; it is a complete satisfaction given to all our natural and sensual appetites; and, when our worn-out senses want repose, either to have breathing time, or to recover strength, pleasure comes from the imagination, which finds enjoyment in thinking of the happiness afforded by rest. The philosopher is a person who refuses no pleasures which do not produce greater sorrows and who knows how to create new ones."

"And you say that it is done by getting rid of prejudices? Then tell me what prejudices are and what must be done to get rid of them."

"Your question, my dear girl, is not an easy one to answer, for moral philosophy does not know a more important one or a more difficult one to decide; it is a lesson which lasts throughout life. I will tell you in a few words that we call 'prejudice' every so-called duty for the existence of which we find no reason in nature."

"Then nature must be the philosopher's principal study?"

"Indeed it is; the most learned of philosophers is the one who commits the fewest errors."

"What philosopher, in your opinion, has committed the smallest quantity of errors?"

"Socrates."

"Yet he was in error sometimes?"

"Yes, in metaphysics."

"Oh! never mind that, for I think he could very well manage without that study."

"You are mistaken; morals are only the metaphysics of physics; nature is everything, and I give you leave to consider as a madman whoever tells you that he has made a new discovery in metaphysics. But if I went on, my dear, I might appear rather obscure to you. Proceed slowly, think, let your maxims be the consequence of just reasoning, and keep your happiness in view; in the end you must be happy."

"I prefer the lesson you have just taught me to the one which M. Baletti will give me to-morrow; for I have an idea that it will weary me, and now I am much interested."

"How do you know that you are interested?"

"Because I wish you not to leave me."

"Truly, my dear Vesian, never has a philosopher described ennui better than you have done. How happy I feel! How comes it that I wish to prove it by kissing you?"

"No doubt because, to be happy, the soul must agree with the senses."

"Indeed, my divine Vesian! Your intelligence is charming."

"It is your work, dear friend, and I am so grateful to you that I share your desires."

"What is there to prevent us from satisfying such natural desires? Let us embrace one another tenderly."

What a lesson in philosophy! It seemed to us such a sweet one, our happiness was so complete that at daybreak we were still kissing one another, and it was only when we parted in the morning that we discovered that the door of the room had remained open all night.

Baletti gave her a few lessons, and she was received at the opera, but she did not remain there more than two or three months, regulating her conduct carefully according to the precepts I had laid out for her. She never received Narbonne again, and at last accepted a nobleman who proved himself very different from all others, for the first thing he did was to make her give up the stage, although it was not a thing according to the fashion of those days. I do not recollect his name exactly; it was Count of Tressan or Tréan. She behaved in a respectable way and remained with him until his death. No one speaks of her now, although she is living in easy circumstances; but she is fifty-six, and in Paris a woman of that age is no longer considered as being among the living.

After she had left the Hôtel de Bourgogne, I never spoke to her. Whenever I met her covered with jewels and diamonds, our souls saluted each other with joy, but her happiness was too precious for me to make any attempt against it. Her brother found a situation, but I lost sight of him.

CHAPTER 32

I WENT to St. Laurent's Fair with my friend Patu, who, taking it into his head to sup with a Flemish actress known by the name of Morphi, invited me to go with him. I felt no inclination for the girl, but what can we refuse to a friend? I did as he wished. After we had supped with the actress, Patu fancied a night devoted to a more agreeable occupation, and, as I did not want to leave him, I asked for a sofa on which I could sleep quietly during the night.

Morphi had a sister, a slovenly girl of thirteen, who told me that, if I would give her a crown, she would abandon her bed to me. I agreed to her proposal, and she took me to a small closet, where I found a straw palliasso on four pieces of wood.

"Do you call this a bed, my child?"

"I have no other, sir."

"Then I do not want it, and you shall not have the crown."

"Did you intend undressing?"

"Of course."

"What an idea! There are no sheets."

"Do you sleep with your clothes on?"

"Oh, no!"

"Well, then, go to bed as usual, and you shall have the crown."

"Why?"

"I want to see you undressed."

"But you won't do anything to me?"

"Not the slightest thing."

She undressed, laid herself on her miserable straw bed and covered herself with an old curtain. In that state, the impression made by her dirty tatters disappeared, and I saw only a perfect beauty. But I wanted to see her entirely. I tried to satisfy my wishes, she opposed some resistance, but a double crown of six francs made her obedient and, finding that her only fault was a complete absence of cleanliness, I began to wash her with my own hands.

You will allow me, dear reader, to suppose that you possess a simple and natural knowledge, namely, that admiration under such circumstances is inseparable from another kind of approbation; luckily, I found the young Morphi disposed to let me do all I pleased, except the only thing for which I most cared! She told me candidly that she would not allow me to do that one thing, because in her sister's estimation it was worth twenty-five louis. I answered that we would bargain on that capital point another time, but that we would not touch it for the present. Satisfied with what I said, all the rest was at my disposal, and I found in her a talent which had attained great perfection in spite of her tender years.

The young H  l  ne faithfully handed to her sister the six francs I had given her and told her the way in which she had earned them. Before I left the house, she told me that, as she was in want of money, she felt disposed to make some abatement on the price of twenty-five louis. I answered with a laugh that I would see her about it the next day. I related the whole affair to Patu, who accused me of exaggeration; and, wishing to prove to him that I was a real connoisseur of female beauty, I insisted upon his seeing H  l  ne as I had seen her. He agreed with me that the chisel of Praxiteles had never carved anything more perfect. As white as a lily, H  l  ne possessed all the beauties which nature and the art of the painter can possibly combine. The loveliness of her features was so heavenly that it carried to the soul an indefinable sentiment of ecstasy, a delightful calm. She was fair, but her beautiful blue eyes equalled the finest black eyes in brilliance.

I went to see her the next evening, and, not agreeing about the price, I made a bargain with her sister to give her twelve francs every time I paid her a visit, and it was agreed that we would occupy her room until I should make up my mind to pay six hundred francs.

It was regular usury, but La Morphi came from a Greek race and was above prejudices. I had no idea of giving such a large sum, because I felt no wish to obtain what it would have procured me; what I obtained was all I cared for.

The elder sister thought I was duped, for in two months I had paid three hundred francs without having done anything, and she attributed my reserve to avarice. Avarice, indeed! I took a fancy to possess a painting of that beautiful body, and a German artist painted it for me splendidly for six louis. The position in which he painted it was delightful. She was lying on her stomach, her arms and her bosom leaning on a pillow, and holding her head sideways as if she were partly on her back. The clever and tasteful artist had painted her nether parts with so much skill and truth that no one could have wished for anything more beautiful; I was delighted with that portrait; it was a speaking likeness, and I wrote under it, *O-Morphi*, not an Homeric word but a Greek one after all, and meaning "beautiful."

But who can anticipate the wonderful and secret decrees of destiny! My friend Patu wished to have a copy of that portrait; one cannot refuse such a slight service to a friend, and I gave an order for it to the same painter. But the artist, having been summoned to Versailles, showed that delightful painting with several others, and M. de Saint-Quentin found it so beautiful that he lost no time in showing it to the King. His Most Christian Majesty, a great connoisseur in that line, wished to ascertain with his own eyes if the artist had made a faithful copy, and, in case the original should prove as beautiful as the copy, the son of St. Louis knew very well what to do with it.

M. de Saint-Quentin, the King's trusty friend, had charge of that important affair; it was his province. He inquired from the painter whether the original could be brought to Versailles, and the artist, not supposing there would be any difficulty, promised to attend to it.

He therefore called on me to communicate the proposal; I thought it was delightful and immediately told the sister, who jumped for joy. She set to work cleaning, washing and clothing the young beauty, and two or three days later they went to Versailles with the painter to see what could be done. M. de Saint-Quentin's valet, having received his instructions from his master, took the two females to a pavilion in the park, and the painter went to the hotel to await the result of his negotiation. Half an hour afterwards the King entered the pavilion alone, asked the young *O-Morphi* if she was a Greek woman, took the portrait out of his pocket and, after a careful examination exclaimed, "I have never seen a better likeness."

His Majesty then sat down, took the young girl on his knees, bestowed a few caresses on her and gave her a kiss.

O-Morphi was looking attentively at her master and smiled.

"What are you laughing at?" said the King.

"I laugh because you and a crown of six francs are as like as two peas."

That *naïveté* made the King laugh heartily, and he asked her whether she would like to remain in Versailles.

"That depends upon my sister," answered the child.

But the sister hastened to tell the King that she could not aspire to a greater honour. The King locked them up again in the pavilion and went away, but in less than a quarter of an hour Saint-Quentin came to fetch them, placed the young girl in an apartment under the care of a female attendant and with the sister went to meet at the hotel the German artist, to whom he gave fifty louis for the portrait and nothing to Morphi. He only took her address, promising her that she would soon hear from him; the next day she received one thousand louis. The worthy German gave me twenty-five louis for my portrait, with a promise to make a careful copy of the one I had given to Patu, and offered to paint for me gratuitously the likeness of every girl of whom I might wish to keep a portrait.

I enjoyed heartily the pleasure of the good Fleming when she found herself in possession of the thousand gold pieces which she had received. Seeing herself rich and considering me as the author of her fortune, she did not know how to show me her gratitude.

The young and lovely *O-Morphi*—for the King always called her by that name—pleased the sovereign by her simplicity and her pretty ways more even than by her rare beauty, the most perfect, the most regular I recollect to have ever seen. He placed her in one of the apartments of his *Parc-aux-cerfs*, the voluptuous monarch's harem, into which no one could get admittance except the ladies presented at the court. At the end of one year she gave birth to a son, who went, like so many others, God knows where, for, as long as Queen Marie lived, no one ever knew what became of the natural children of Louis XV.

O-Morphi fell into disgrace at the end of three years, but the King, as he sent her away, ordered her to receive a sum of four hundred thousand francs, which she brought as a dowry to an officer from Brittany. In 1783, happening to be in Fontainebleau, I made the acquaintance of a charming young man of twenty-five, the offspring of that marriage and the living portrait of his mother, of whose history he had not the slightest knowledge, and I thought it my duty not to enlighten him. I wrote my name on his tablets and begged him to present my compliments to his mother.

A wicked trick of Madame de Valentinois, sister-in-law of the Prince of Monaco, was the cause of *O-Morphi's* disgrace. That lady, who was well known in Paris, told her one day that, if she wished to make the King very merry, she had only to ask him how he treated his old wife. Too simple to guess the snare thus laid out for her, *O-Morphi* actually asked that impertinent question; but Louis XV gave her a look of fury, and exclaimed, "Miserable wretch! who taught you to address me that question?"

The poor *O-Morphi*, almost dead with fright, threw herself on her knees and confessed the truth.

The King left her and never would see her again. The Countess de

Valentinois was exiled for two years from the court. Louis XV, who knew how wrongly he was behaving towards his wife as a husband, would not deserve any reproach at her hands as a king, and woe to anyone who forgot the respect due to the Queen!

The French are undoubtedly the wittiest people in Europe and perhaps in the whole world, but Paris is, all the same, the city for impostors and quacks to make a fortune. When their knavery is found out, people turn it into a joke and laugh, but in the midst of the merriment another mountebank makes his appearance, does something more wonderful than those who preceded him, and makes his fortune whilst the scoffing of the people is in abeyance. It is the unquestionable effect of the power which fashion has over that amiable, clever and lively nation. If anything is astonishing, no matter how extravagant it may be, the crowd is sure to welcome it greedily, for anyone would be afraid of being taken for a fool if he should exclaim, "It is impossible!" Physicians are, perhaps, the only men in France who know that an infinite gulf yawns between the will and the deed, whilst in Italy it is an axiom known to everybody; but I do not mean to say that the Italians are superior to the French.

A certain painter met with great success for some time by announcing a thing which was an impossibility—namely, by pretending that he could make a portrait of a person without seeing the individual and only from the description given. But he wanted the description to be thoroughly accurate. The result of it was that the portrait did greater honour to the person who gave the description than to the painter himself, but at the same time the informer found himself under the obligation of finding the likeness very good; otherwise the artist alleged the most legitimate excuse and said that, if the likeness was not perfect, the fault was to be ascribed to the person who had given an imperfect description.

One evening I was taking supper at Silvia's when one of the guests spoke of that wonderful new artist without laughing and with every appearance of believing the whole affair.

"That painter," added he, "has already painted more than one hundred portraits, and they are all perfect likenesses."

Everybody was of the same opinion; it was splendid. I was the only one who, laughing heartily, took the liberty of saying it was absurd and impossible. The gentleman who had brought the wonderful news, feeling angry, proposed a wager of one hundred louis. I laughed all the more because his offer could not be accepted unless I exposed myself being made a dupe.

"But the portraits are all admirable likenesses."

"I do not believe it or, if they are, then there must be cheating somewhere."

But the gentleman, being bent upon convincing Silvia and me—for she had taken my part—proposed to have us dine with the artist, and we accepted.

The next day we called upon the painter, where we saw a quantity

of portraits, all of which the artist claimed to be speaking likenesses; as we did not know the persons whom they represented, we could not deny his claim.

"Sir," said Silvia to the artist, "could you paint the likeness of my daughter without seeing her?"

"Yes, madam, if you are certain of giving me an exact description of the expression of her features."

We exchanged a glance, and no more was said about it. The painter told us that supper was his favourite meal and that he would be delighted if we would often give him the pleasure of our company. Like all quacks, he possessed an immense quantity of letters and testimonials from Bourdeaux, Toulouse, Lyons, Rouen, etc., which paid the highest compliments to the perfection of his portraits or gave descriptions for new pictures ordered from him. His portraits, by the way, had to be paid for in advance.

Two or three days afterwards I met his pretty niece, who obligingly upbraided me for not having yet availed myself of her uncle's invitation to supper. The niece was a dainty morsel worthy of a king, and, her reproaches being very flattering to my vanity, I promised I would come the next day; in less than a week it became a serious affair. I fell in love with the interesting niece, who, being full of wit and well disposed to enjoy herself, had no love for me and granted me no favour. I hoped and, seeing myself caught, I felt it was the best thing I could do.

One day when I was alone in my room, drinking my coffee and thinking of her, the door was suddenly opened without anyone being announced, and a young man came in. I did not recollect him, but, without giving me time to ask any questions, he said to me, "Sir, I had the honour of meeting you at the supper-table of M. Samson, the painter."

"Ah, yes! I beg you to excuse me, sir, I did not at first recollect you."

"It is natural, for your eyes are always on Mlle. Samson."

"Very likely, but you must admit she is a charming creature."

"I have no difficulty whatever in agreeing with you; to my misery, I know it but too well."

"You are in love with her?"

"Alas, yes! and, I say again, to my misery."

"To your misery? But why do you not gain her love?"

"That is the very thing I have been striving for since last year, and I was beginning to have some hope when your arrival reduced me to despair."

"I have reduced you to despair?"

"Yes, sir."

"I am very sorry, but I cannot help it."

"You could easily help it; and, if you would allow me, I could suggest to you the way in which you could greatly oblige me."

"Speak candidly."

"You might never set foot in the house again."

"That is a rather singular proposal, but I agree that it is truly the only thing I can do if I have a real wish to oblige you. Do you think, however, that in that case you would succeed in gaining her affection?"

"Then it will be my business to succeed. Do not go there again, and I will take care of the rest."

"I might render you that very great service; but you must confess that you must have a singular opinion of me to suppose that I am a man to do such a thing."

"Yes, sir, I admit that it may appear singular; but I take you for a man of great sense and sound intellect, and, after considering the subject deeply, I have thought that you would put yourself in my place, that you would not wish to make me miserable or expose your own life for a young girl who can have inspired you with but a passing fancy, whilst my only wish is to secure the happiness or the misery of my life, whichever it may prove, by uniting her existence with mine."

"But suppose I intended, like you, to ask her in marriage?"

"Then we should both be worthy of pity, and one of us would have ceased to exist before the other obtained her, for, as long as I live, Mlle. Samson shall not be the wife of another."

This young man, solidly built, pale, grave, as cold as a piece of marble, madly in love, who, in his reason mixed with utter despair, came to speak to me in such a manner with the most surprising calm, made me pause and consider. Undoubtedly I was not afraid, but, although in love with Mlle. Samson, I did not feel my passion sufficiently strong to cut the throat of a man for the sake of her beautiful eyes or lose my own life to defend my budding affection. Without answering the young man, I began to pace up and down my room, and for a quarter of an hour I weighed the following question which I put to myself: Which decision will appear more manly in the eyes of my rival and win my own esteem to the deeper degree, namely, to accept coolly his offer to cut one another's throats, or allay his anxiety by withdrawing from the field with dignity?

Pride whispered, "Fight!" Reason said, "Compel thy rival to acknowledge thee a wiser man than he."

"What would you think of me, sir," I said to him, with an air of decision, "if I consented to give up my visits to Mlle. Samson?"

"I would think that you had pity on a miserable man, and I say that in that case you will ever find me ready to shed the last drop of my blood to prove my deep gratitude."

"Who are you?"

"My name is Garnier; I am the only son of M. Garnier, wine merchant in the Rue de Seine."

"Well, M. Garnier, I will never again call on Mlle. Samson. Let us be friends."

"Until death. Farewell, sir."

"Adieu. Be happy!"

Patu came in five minutes after Garnier had left me; I related the adventure to him, and he thought I was a hero.

"I would have acted as you have done," he observed, "but I would not have acted like Garnier."

It was about that time that the Count de Melfort, colonel of the Orléans regiment, entreated me through Camille, Coraline's sister, to answer two questions by means of my cabalism. I gave two answers, very vague yet meaning a great deal; I put them under a sealed envelope and gave them to Camille, who asked me the next day to accompany her to a place which she said she could not name to me. I followed her; she took me to the Palais Royal and then through a narrow staircase up to the apartments of the Duchesse de Chartres. I waited about a quarter of an hour, at the end of which time the duchess came in and loaded Camille with caresses for having brought me. Then, addressing herself to me, she told me, with dignity yet very graciously, the difficulty she experienced in understanding the answers I had sent, which she was holding in her hand. At first I expressed some perplexity at the questions having emanated from her Royal Highness, and I told her afterwards that I understood cabalism, but could not interpret the meaning of the answers obtained through it and that Her Highness must ask new questions likely to render the answers easier to be understood. She wrote down all she could not make out and all she wanted to know.

"Madame, you must be kind enough to divide the questions, for the cabalistic oracle never answers two questions at the same time."

"Well, then, prepare the questions yourself."

"Your Highness will excuse me, but every word must be written with your own hand. Recollect, madame, that you will address yourself to a superior intelligence knowing all your secrets."

She began to write and asked seven or eight questions. She read them over carefully and said, with a face beaming with noble confidence, "Sir, I wish to be certain that no one shall ever know what I have just written."

"Your Highness may rely on my honour."

I read attentively and saw that her wish for secrecy was reasonable and that, if I put the questions in my pocket, I should run the risk of losing them and implicating myself.

"I require only three hours to complete my task," I said to the duchess, "and I wish Your Highness to feel no anxiety. If you have any other engagement, you can leave me here alone, provided I am not disturbed by anybody. When it is completed, I will put it all in a sealed envelope; I only want Your Highness to tell me to whom I must deliver the parcel."

"Either to me or to Madame de Polignac if you know her."

"Yes, madame, I have the honour to know her."

The duchess handed me a small tinder-box to enable me to light a wax candle, and she went away with Camille. I remained alone locked up in the room, and at the end of three hours, just as I had completed

my task, Madame de Polignac came for the parcel and I left the palace.

The Duchess de Chartres, daughter of the Prince de Conti, was twenty-six years of age. She was endowed with that particular sort of wit which renders a woman adorable. She was lively, above the prejudices of rank, cheerful, full of jest, a lover of pleasure, which she preferred to a long life. "Short and sweet," were the words she had constantly on her lips. She was pretty but stood badly and used to laugh at Marcel, the teacher of graceful deportment, who wanted to correct her awkward bearing. She kept her head bent forward and her feet turned inward when dancing, yet she was a charming dancer. Unfortunately her face was covered with pimples, which injured her beauty very greatly. Her physicians thought they were caused by a disease of the liver, but they came from impurity of the blood, which at last killed her and from which she suffered throughout her life.

The questions she had asked from my oracle related to affairs connected with her heart, and she wished likewise to know how she could get rid of the blotches which disfigured her. My answers were rather obscure in such matters as I was not specially acquainted with, but they were very clear concerning her disease, and my oracle became precious and necessary to Her Highness.

The next day, after dinner, Camille wrote me a note, as I expected, requesting me to give up all other engagements in order to present myself at five o'clock at the Palais Royal, in the same room in which the duchess had already received me the day before. I was punctual. An elderly *valet de chambre*, who was waiting for me, immediately went to give notice of my arrival, and five minutes after the charming princess made her appearance. After addressing me in a very complimentary manner, she drew all my answers from her pocket and inquired whether I had any pressing engagements.

"Your Highness may be certain that I shall never have any more important business than to attend to your wishes."

"Very well; I do not intend to go out, and we can work."

She then showed me all the questions which she had already prepared on different subjects and particularly those relating to the cure of her pimples. One circumstance had contributed to render my oracle precious to her because nobody could possibly know it and I had guessed it. Had I not done so, I daresay it would have been all the same. I had laboured myself under the same disease and was enough of a physician to be aware that to attempt the cure of a cutaneous disease by active remedies might kill the patient.

I had already answered that she could not get rid of the pimples on her face in less than a week and that a year of diet would be necessary to effect a radical cure.

We spent three hours in ascertaining what she was to do, and, believing implicitly in the power and science of the oracle, she undertook to follow faithfully everything it ordered. Within one week all the ugly pimples had entirely disappeared.

I took care to purge her slightly; I prescribed every day what she

was to eat, and forbade the use of all cosmetics, advising her merely to wash herself morning and evening with plantain water. The modest oracle told the princess to make use of the same water for her ablutions of every part of her body where she desired to obtain the same result, and she obeyed the prescription religiously.

I went to the opera on purpose on the day when the duchess showed herself there with a smooth and rosy skin. After the opera she took a walk in the *grande allée* of the Palais Royal, followed by the ladies of her suite and flattered by everybody. She saw me and honoured me with a smile. I was truly happy. Camille, Madame de Polignac and M. de Melfort were the only persons who knew that I was the oracle of the duchess, and I enjoyed my success. But the next day a few pimples reappeared on her beautiful complexion, and I received an order to repair at once to the Palais Royal.

The valet, who did not know me, showed me into a delightful boudoir near a closet in which there was a bath. The duchess came in; she looked sad, for she had several small pimples on her forehead and chin. She held in her hand a question for the oracle, and, as it was only a short one, I thought I would give her the pleasure of finding the answer by herself. The numbers translated by the princess reproached her with having transgressed the regimen prescribed; she confessed to having drunk some liqueurs and eaten some ham; but she was astounded at having found that answer herself and could not understand how such an answer could result from an agglomeration of numbers. At that moment one of her women came in to whisper a few words to her; she told her to wait outside and, turning towards me, said, "Have you any objection to seeing one of your friends who is as delicate as discreet?"

With these words, she hastily concealed in her pocket all the papers which did not relate to her disease; then she called out. A man entered the room whom I took for a stable-boy; it was M. de Melfort.

"See," said the princess to him. "M. Casanova has taught me the cabalistic science."

And she showed him the answer she had obtained herself. The count could not believe it.

"Well," said the duchess to me, "we must convince him. What shall I ask?"

"Anything Your Highness chooses."

She considered for one instant and, drawing from her pocket a small ivory box, wrote, "Tell me why this pomatum has no longer any effect."

She formed the pyramid, the columns and the key, as I had taught her, and, as she was ready to get the answer, I told her how to make the additions and subtractions which seem to come from the numbers but which in reality are only arbitrary; then I told her to interpret the numbers in letters, and I left the room under some pretext. I came back when I thought that she had completed her translation, and found her wrapped in amazement.

"Ah, sir!" she exclaimed, "what an answer!"

"Perhaps it is not the right one; but that will sometimes happen, madame."

"Not the right one, sir? It is divine! Here it is: 'That pomatum has no effect upon the skin of a woman who has been a mother'."

"I do not see anything extraordinary in that answer, madame."

"Very likely, sir, but it is because you do not know that the pomatum in question was given to me five years ago by the Abbé de Brosse; it cured me at that time, but it was ten months before the birth of the Duke de Montpensier. I would give anything in the world to be thoroughly acquainted with that sublime cabalistic science."

"What!" said the count, "is it the pomatum the history of which I know?"

"Precisely."

"It is astonishing!"

"I wish to ask one more question concerning a woman whose name I would rather not give."

"Say the woman whom I have in my thoughts."

She then asked this question: "What disease is that woman suffering from?" She made the calculation, and the answer which I made her bring forth was this: "She wants to deceive her husband." This time the duchess fairly screamed with astonishment.

It was getting very late, and I was preparing to take leave when M. de Melfort, who was speaking to Her Highness, told me that we might go together. When we were out, he told me that the cabalistic answer concerning the pomatum was truly wonderful. This was his history of it.

"The duchess, pretty as you see her now, had her face so fearfully covered with pimples that the duke, thoroughly disgusted, had not the courage to come near her to enjoy his rights as a husband and the poor princess was pining with useless longing to become a mother. The Abbé de Brosse cured her with that pomatum, and, her beautiful face having entirely recovered its original bloom, she made her appearance at the Théâtre Français, in the Queen's box. The Duke de Chartres, not knowing that his wife had gone to the theatre, where she went but very seldom, was in the King's box. He did not recognise the duchess, but, thinking her very handsome, he enquired who she was, and, when he was told, he would not believe it; he left the royal box, went to his wife, complimented her and announced his visit for the very same night. The result of that visit was, nine months afterwards, the birth of the Duke de Montpensier, who is now five years old and enjoys excellent health. During the whole of her pregnancy the duchess kept her face smooth and blooming, but immediately after her delivery the pimples reappeared, and the pomatum remained without any effect."

As he concluded his explanation, the count offered me a tortoise-shell box with a very good likeness of Her Royal Highness and said, "The duchess begs your acceptance of this portrait, and, in case you would like to have it set, she wishes you to make use of this for that purpose."

It was a purse of one hundred louis. I accepted both and entreated

the count to offer the expressions of my profound gratitude to Her Highness. I never had the portrait mounted, for I was then in want of money for some other purpose.

After that the duchess did me the honour of sending for me several times; but her cure remained altogether out of the question; she could not make up her mind to follow a regular diet. She would sometimes keep me at work for five or six hours, now in one corner, now in another, going in and out herself all the time and having either dinner or supper brought to me by the old valet, who never uttered a word.

Her questions to the oracle alluded only to secret affairs which she was curious to know, and through the answers she often found truths with which I was not myself acquainted. She wished me to teach her the cabalistic science, but she never pressed her wish upon me. She, however, commissioned M. de Melfort to tell me that, if I would teach her, she would get me an appointment with an income of twenty-five thousand francs. Alas! it was impossible! I was madly in love with her, but I would not for the world have allowed her to guess my feelings. My pride was the corrective of my love. I was afraid of her haughtiness humiliating me, and perhaps I was wrong. All I know is that I even now repent of having listened to a foolish pride. It is true that I enjoyed certain privileges which she might have refused me if she had known my love.

One day she wished my oracle to tell her whether it was possible to cure a cancer which Madame de la Popelinière had in the breast; I took it into my head to answer that the lady alluded to had no cancer and was enjoying excellent health.

"How is that?" said the duchess. "Everyone in Paris believes her to be suffering from a cancer, and she has consultation upon consultation. Yet I have faith in the oracle."

Soon afterwards, seeing the Duke de Richelieu at the court, she told him she was certain that Madame de la Popelinière was not ill. The marshal, who knew the secret, told her she was mistaken, but she proposed a wager of a hundred thousand francs. I trembled when the duchess related the conversation to me.

"Has he accepted your wager?" I inquired, anxiously.

"No; he seemed surprised. You are aware that he ought to know the truth."

Three or four days after that conversation the duchess told me triumphantly that M. de Richelieu had confessed to her that the cancer was only a ruse to excite the pity of her husband, with whom Madame de la Popelinière wanted to live again on good terms; she added that the marshal had expressed his willingness to pay one thousand louis to know how she had discovered the truth.

"If you wish to earn that sum," said the duchess to me, "I will tell him all about it."

But I was afraid of a snare; I knew the temper of the marshal, and the story of the hole in the wall, through which he introduced himself into that lady's apartment, was the talk of all Paris. M. de la Popelinière

himself had made the adventure more public by refusing to live with his wife, to whom he paid an income of twelve thousand francs.

The Duchesse de Chartres had written some charming poetry on that amusing affair; but outside of her own coterie no one knew it except the King, who was very fond of the princess, although she was in the habit of scoffing at him. One day, for instance, she asked him whether it was true that the King of Prussia was expected in Paris. Louis XV having answered that it was an idle rumour, "I am very sorry," she said, "for I am longing to see a king."

My brother had completed several pictures, and, having decided on presenting one to M. de Marigny, we repaired one morning to the apartment of that nobleman, who lived in the Louvre, where all the artists were in the habit of paying their court to him. We were shown into a hall adjoining his private apartment, and, having arrived early, we waited for M. de Marigny. My brother's picture was exposed there; it was a battle piece in the style of Bourguignon.

The first person who passed through the room stopped before the picture, examined it attentively and moved on, evidently thinking it a poor painting; a moment afterwards two more persons came in, looked at the picture, smiled and said, "That's the work of a beginner."

I glanced at my brother, who was seated near me; he was in a fever. In less than a quarter of an hour the room was full of people, and the unfortunate picture was the butt of everybody's laughter. My poor brother felt almost dying and thanked his stars that no one knew him personally.

The state of his mind was such that I heartily pitied him; I rose, with the intention of going to some other room, and to console him I told him that M. de Marigny would soon come and that his approbation of the picture would avenge him for the insults of the crowd. Fortunately this was not my brother's opinion; we left the room hurriedly, took a coach, went home and sent our servant to fetch back the painting. As soon as it had been brought back my brother made a battle of it in real earnest, for he cut it up with a sword into twenty pieces. He made up his mind to settle his affairs in Paris immediately and go somewhere else to study an art which he loved to idolatry; we resolved on going to Dresden together.

Two or three days before leaving the delightful city of Paris I dined alone at the house of the gatekeeper of the Tuileries; his name was Condé. After dinner his wife, a rather pretty woman, presented me the bill, on which every item was reckoned at double its value. I pointed it out to her, but she answered very curtly that she could not abate one sou. I paid, and, as the bill was receipted with the words "femme Condé," I took the pen and to the word "Condé" I added "Labré" and went away, leaving the bill on the table.

I was taking a walk in the Tuileries, not thinking any more of my female extortioner, when a small man, with his hat cocked on one side of his head and a large nosegay in his buttonhole and sporting a long

sword, swaggered up to me and informed me, without any further explanation, that he had a fancy to cut my throat.

"But, my small specimen of humanity," I said, "you would require to jump on a chair to reach my throat. I will cut off your ears."

"*Sacrebleu*, monsieur!"

"No vulgar passion, my dear sir; follow me, you shall soon be satisfied."

I walked rapidly towards the Porte de l'Etoile, where, seeing that the place was deserted, I abruptly asked the fellow what he wanted and why he had attacked me.

"I am the Chevalier de Talvis," he answered. "You have insulted an honourable woman who is under my protection; unsheathe!"

With these words, he drew his long sword; I unsheathed mine; after a minute or two I lunged rapidly and wounded him in the breast. He jumped back, exclaiming that I had wounded him treacherously.

"You lie, you rascally mannikin! Acknowledge it, or I thrust my sword through your miserable body."

"You will not do it, for I am wounded; but I insist upon having my revenge, and we will leave the decision of this to competent judges."

"Miserable wrangler, wretched fighter, if you are not satisfied, I will cut off your ears!"

I left him there, satisfied that I had acted according to the laws of the *duello*, for he had drawn his sword before I had, and, if he had not been skilful enough to cover himself in good time, it was not, of course, my business to teach him.

Towards the middle of August I left Paris with my brother. I had made a stay of two years in that city, the best in the world. I had enjoyed myself greatly and had met with no unpleasantness except that I had now and then been short of money. We went through Metz, Mayence and Frankfort and arrived in Dresden at the end of the same month. My mother offered us the most affectionate welcome and was delighted to see us again. My brother remained four years in that pleasant city, constantly engaged in the study of his art and copying all the fine paintings of battles by the great masters in the celebrated Electoral Gallery.

He went back to Paris only when he felt certain that he could set criticism at defiance; I shall tell hereafter how it was that we both reached that city about the same time. But before that period, dear reader, you will see what good and adverse fortune did in turn for and against me.

My life in Dresden until the end of the carnival in 1753 does not offer any extraordinary adventure. To please the actors, and especially my mother, I wrote a kind of melodrama, in which I brought out two harlequins. It was a parody of the *Frères Ennemis*, by Racine. The King was highly amused at the comic fancies which filled my play, and he made me a beautiful present. This monarch was grand and generous, and these qualities found a ready echo in the breast of the famous Count de Brühl. I left Dresden soon after that, bidding adieu to my

mother, to my brother François, and to my sister, then the wife of Pierre Auguste, chief player of the harpsichord at the Court, who died two years ago, leaving his widow and family in comfortable circumstances.

My stay in Dresden was marked by an amorous souvenir, which I got rid of, as in previous similar circumstances, by a diet of six weeks. I have often remarked that the greatest part of my life was spent in trying to make myself ill and, when I had succeeded, in trying to recover my health. I have met with equal success in both things; and now that I enjoy excellent health in that line, I am very sorry to be physically unable to make myself ill again; but age, that cruel and unavoidable disease, compels me to be in good health in spite of myself. The illness I allude to, which the Italians call *mal français*, although we might claim the honour of its first importation, does not shorten life but leaves indelible marks on the face. Those scars—less honourable perhaps than those which are won in the service of Mars, being obtained through pleasure—ought not to leave any regrets behind.

In Dresden I had frequent opportunities of seeing the King, who was very fond of the Count de Brühl, his minister, because that favourite possessed the double secret of showing himself more extravagant even than his master and of indulging all his whims. Never was a monarch a greater enemy to economy; he laughed heartily when he was plundered, and he spent a great deal in order to have occasion to laugh often. As he had not sufficient wit to amuse himself with the follies of other kings and with the absurdities of humankind, he kept four buffoons, who are called fools in Germany, although these degraded beings are generally more witty than their masters. The province of those jesters is to make their master laugh by all sorts of jokes, which are usually nothing but disgusting tricks or low, impertinent jests.

Yet these professional buffoons sometimes captivate the mind of their master to such an extent that they obtain from him very important favours in behalf of the persons they protect, and the consequence is that they are often courted by the highest families. Where is the man who will not debase himself if he be in want? Does not Agamemnon say in Homer that men are forced by circumstances to be guilty of meanness? And Agamemnon and Homer lived long before our time! It evidently proves that men are at all times moved by the same motive, namely, self-interest.

It is wrong to say that the Count de Brühl was the ruin of Saxony, for he was only the faithful minister of his royal master's inclinations. His children are poor and justify their father's conduct.

The court at Dresden was at that time the most brilliant in Europe; the fine arts flourished, but there was no gallantry, for King Augustus had no inclination for the fair sex, and the Saxons were not of a nature to be thus inclined unless the example was set by their sovereign.

At my arrival in Prague, where I did not intend to stop, I delivered a letter I had for Locatelli, manager of the opera, and went to pay a visit to Madame Morelli, an old acquaintance, for whom I had great

affection; for two or three days she supplied all the wants of my heart.

As I was on the point of leaving Prague, I met in the street my friend Fabris, who had become a colonel, and he insisted upon my dining with him. After embracing him, I represented to him, but in vain, that I had made all my arrangements to go away immediately.

"You will go this evening," he said, "with a friend of mine, and you will catch the coach."

I had to give way and was delighted to have done so, for the remainder of the day passed in the most agreeable manner. Fabris was longing for war, and his wishes were gratified two years afterwards; he covered himself with glory.

I must say one word about Locatelli, who was an original character, well worthy to be known. He took his meals every day at a table laid out for thirty persons, and the guests were his actors, actresses, dancers of both sexes and a few friends. He did the honours of his well supplied board nobly, and his real passion was good living. I shall have occasion to mention him again at the time of my journey to St. Petersburg, where I met him and where he died only lately at the age of ninety.

CHAPTER 33

I ARRIVED for the first time in the capital of Austria at the age of eight-and-twenty, well provided with clothes but rather short of money, a circumstance which made it necessary for me to curtail my expenses until the arrival of the proceeds of a letter of exchange which I had drawn upon M. de Bragadin. The only letter of recommendation I had was from the poet Migliavacca, of Dresden, addressed to the illustrious Abbé Metastasio, whom I wished ardently to know. I delivered the letter the day after my arrival, and in one hour of conversation I found him more learned than I should have supposed from his works. Besides, Metastasio was so modest that at first I did not think that modesty natural, but it was not long before I discovered that it was genuine, for, when he recited something of his own composition, he was the first to call the attention of his hearers to the important parts or to the fine passages with as much simplicity as he would remark the weak ones. I spoke to him of his tutor Gravina, and, as we were on that subject, he recited to me five or six stanzas which he had written on his death and which had not been printed. Moved by the remembrance of his friend and by the sad beauty of his own poetry, his eyes were filled with tears, and, when he had done reciting the stanzas, he said, in a tone of touching simplicity, *Ditemi il vero; si può dir meglio?*

I answered that he alone had the right to believe it impossible. I then asked him whether he had to work a great deal to compose his beautiful poetry; he showed me four or five pages which he had covered with erasures and words crossed and scratched out only because he had wished to bring fourteen lines to perfection, and he assured me that he had never been able to compose more than that amount in one day. He

confirmed my knowledge of a truth which I had found out before, namely, that the very lines which most readers believe to have flowed easily from the poet's pen are generally those which he has had the greatest difficulty in composing.

"Which of your operas," I inquired, "do you like best?"

"*Attilio Regolo. Ma questo non vuol già dire che sia il migliore.*"

"All your works have been translated in Paris into French prose, but the publisher was ruined, for it is not possible to read them and it proves the elevation and the power of your poetry."

"Several years ago another foolish publisher ruined himself by a translation into French prose of the splendid poetry of Ariosto. I laugh at those who maintain that poetry can be translated into prose."

"I am of your opinion."

"And you are right."

He told me that he had never written an arietta without composing the music of it himself, but that as a general rule he never showed his music to anyone.

"The French," he added, "entertain the very strange belief that it is possible to adapt poetry to music already composed."

And he made on that subject this very philosophical remark, "You might just as well say to a sculptor, 'Here is a piece of marble; make a Venus and let her expression be shown before the features are chiselled'."

I went to the Imperial Library and was much surprised to meet De la Haye in the company of two Poles and a young Venetian, whom his father had entrusted to him to complete his education. I believed De la Haye to be in Poland, and, as the meeting awakened interesting recollections, I was pleased to see him. I embraced him repeatedly with real pleasure.

He told me he was in Vienna on business and would go to Venice during the summer. We paid one another several visits, and, hearing that I was rather short of money, he lent me fifty ducats, which I returned a short time after. He told me that Bavois was already lieutenant-colonel in the Venetian army, and the news afforded me great pleasure. He had been fortunate enough to be appointed adjutant-general by M. Morosini, who, after his return from his embassy in France, had made him Commissary of the Borders. I was delighted to hear of the happiness and success of two men who certainly could not help acknowledging me as the original cause of their good fortune. In Vienna I acquired the certainty of De la Haye being a Jesuit, but he would not let anyone allude to the subject.

Not knowing where to go and longing for some recreation, I went to the rehearsal of the opera which was to be performed after Easter and met Bodin, the first dancer, who had married the handsome Geoffroi, whom I had seen in Turin. I likewise met in the same place Campioni, the husband of the beautiful Ancilla. He told me he had been compelled to apply for a divorce because she dishonoured him too publicly. Campioni was at the same time a great dancer and a great gambler. I took up my lodgings with him.

In Vienna everything was beautiful; money was then very plentiful and luxury very great; but the severity of the Empress made the worship of Venus difficult, particularly for strangers. A legion of vile spies, who were decorated with the fine title of Commissaries of Chastity, were the merciless tormentors of all the girls. The Empress did not practise the sublime virtue of tolerance for what is called illegitimate love, and in her excessive devotion she thought that her persecutions of the most natural inclinations in man and woman were very agreeable to God. Holding in her imperial hands the register of cardinal sins, she fancied that she could be indulgent for six of them and keep all her severity for the seventh, lewdness, which in her estimation could not be forgiven.

"One can ignore pride," she would say, "for dignity wears the same garb. Avarice is fearful, it is true; but one might be mistaken about it, because it is often very like economy. As for anger, it is a murderous disease in its excess, but murder is punished with death. Gluttony is sometimes nothing but epicurism, and religion does not forbid that sin, for in good company it is held a valuable quality; besides, it blends itself with appetite, and so much the worse for those who die of indigestion. Envy is a low passion which no one ever avows; to punish it in any other way than by its own corroding venom, I would have to torture everybody at court; and weariness is the punishment of sloth. But lust is a different thing altogether; my chaste soul could not forgive such a sin, and I declare open war against it. My subjects are at liberty to think women handsome as much as they please; women may do all in their power to appear beautiful; people may entertain each other as they like, because I cannot forbid conversation; but they shall not gratify desire on which the preservation of the human race depends unless it is in the holy state of legal marriage. Therefore all the miserable creatures who live by the barter of their caresses and of the charms given to them by nature shall be sent to Temeswar. I am aware that in Rome people are very indulgent on that point and that, in order to prevent another greater crime (which is not prevented), every cardinal has one or more mistresses, but in Rome the climate requires certain concessions which are not necessary here, where the bottle and the pipe replace all pleasures. (She might have added "and the table," for the Austrians are known to be terrible eaters.)

"I will have no indulgence either for domestic disorders, for the moment I hear that a wife is unfaithful to her husband, I will have her locked up, in spite of all, in spite of the generally received opinion that the husband is the real judge and master of his wife; that privilege cannot be granted in my kingdom, where husbands are by far too indifferent on that subject. Fanatic husbands may complain as much as they please that I dishonour them by punishing their wives; they are dishonoured already by the fact of the woman's infidelity."

"But, madame, dishonour arises in reality only from the fact of infidelity being made public; besides, you might be deceived, although you are Empress."

"I know that, but that is no business of yours, and I do not grant you the right of contradicting me."

Such is the way in which Maria Theresa would have argued, and, notwithstanding the principle of virtue from which her argument had originated, it had ultimately given birth to all the infamous deeds which her executioners, the Commissaries of Chastity, committed with impunity in her name. At every hour of the day, in all the streets of Vienna, they carried off and took to prison the poor girls who happened to live alone and, very often, were going out only to earn an honest living. I should like to know how it was possible to know that a girl was going to someone to get consolation or that she was in search of someone disposed to offer her those consolations? Indeed, it was difficult. A spy would follow them at a distance. The police department kept a crowd of those spies, and, as the scoundrels wore no particular uniform, it was impossible to know them; as a natural consequence, there was a general distrust of all strangers. If a girl entered a house, the spy who had followed her waited for her, stopped her as she came out and subjected her to an interrogatory. If the poor creature looked uneasy, if she hesitated in answering in such a way as to satisfy the spy, the fellow would take her to prison—in all cases beginning by plundering her of whatever money or jewellery she carried about her person, the restitution of which could never be obtained. Vienna was in that respect a true den of privileged thieves. It happened to me one day in Leopoldstadt that, in the midst of some tumult, a girl slipped into my hand a gold watch, to secure it from the clutches of a police-spy who was pressing upon her to take her up. I did not know the poor girl, whom I was fortunate enough to see again one month afterwards. She was pretty and had been compelled to more than one sacrifice in order to obtain her liberty. I was glad to be able to hand her watch back to her, and, although she was well worthy of a man's attention, I did not ask her for anything to reward my faithfulness. The only way in which girls could walk unmolested in the streets was to go about with their head bent down and with beads in hand, for in that case the disgusting brood of spies dared not arrest them, because they might be on their way to church and Maria Theresa would certainly have sent to the gallows the spy guilty of such a mistake.

Those low villains rendered a stay in Vienna very unpleasant to foreigners, and it was a matter of the greatest difficulty to gratify the slightest natural want without running the risk of being annoyed. One day, as I was standing close to the wall in a narrow street, I was much astonished at hearing myself rudely addressed by a scoundrel with a round wig, who told me that, if I did not go somewhere else to finish what I had begun, he would have me arrested!

"And why, if you please?"

"Because on your left there is a woman who can see you."

I lifted up my head and saw on the fourth story a woman who, with the telescope she had applied to her eye, could not have told whether I was a Jew or a Christian. I obeyed, laughing heartily, and related the

adventure everywhere, but no one was astonished because the same thing happened over and over again every day.

In order to study the manners and habits of the people, I took my meals in all sorts of places. One day, having gone with Campioni to dine at The Crawfish, I found, to my great surprise, sitting at the *table d'hôte*, that Bepe il Cadetto whose acquaintance I had made at the time of my arrest in the Spanish army and whom I had met afterwards in Venice and Lyons under the name of Don José Marcatti. Campioni, who had been his partner in Lyons, embraced him, talked with him in private and informed me that the man had resumed his real name and was now called Count Affisio. He told me that after dinner there would be a faro bank in which he would have an interest, and he therefore requested me not to play. I agreed to keep out. Affisio won; a captain of the name of Beccaria threw the cards at his face—a trifle to which the self-styled count was accustomed and which did not elicit any remark from him. When the game was over, we repaired to the coffee-room, where an officer of gentlemanly appearance, staring at me, began to smile but not in an offensive manner.

"Sir," I asked him, politely, "may I ask why you are laughing?"

"It makes me laugh to see that you do not recognise me."

"I have some idea that I have seen you somewhere, but I could not say where or when I had that honour."

"Nine years ago, by the orders of the Prince de Lobkowitz, I escorted you to the Gate of Rimini."

"You are Baron Vais?"

"Precisely."

We embraced one another; he offered me his friendly services, promising to procure me all the pleasures he could in Vienna. I accepted gratefully, and the same evening he presented me to a countess, at whose house I made the acquaintance of the Abbé Testagrossa, who was called Grosse-Tête by everybody. He was minister of the Duke of Modena and great at court because he had negotiated the marriage of the archduke with Béatrice d'Este. I also became acquainted there with the Count of Roquendorf and Count Sarotin and with several noble young ladies who are called in Germany *fräulein*, and with a baroness who had led a pretty wild life, but who could yet captivate a man. We had supper, and I was created "baron." It was in vain that I observed that I had no title whatever. "You must be something," I was told, "and you cannot be less than baron. You must confess yourself to be at least that if you wish to be received anywhere in Vienna."

"Well, I will be a baron, since it is of no importance."

The baroness was not long before she gave me to understand that she felt kindly disposed towards me and would receive my attentions with pleasure; I paid her a visit the very next day. "If you are fond of cards," she said, "come in the evening." At her house I made the acquaintance of several gamblers and of three or four *fräuleins* who, without any dread of the Commissaries of Chastity, were devoted to the worship of Venus and were so kindly disposed that they were not afraid

of lowering their nobility by accepting some reward for their kindness—a circumstance which proved to me that the Commissaries were in the habit of troubling only the girls who did not frequent good houses.

The baroness invited me to introduce all my friends, so I brought to her house Vais, Campioni and Afflisio. The last one played, held the bank, won, and Tramontini, with whom I had become acquainted, presented him to his wife, who was called Madame Tasi. It was through her that Afflisio made the useful acquaintance of the Prince of Saxe-Hildburghausen. This introduction was the origin of the great fortune made by that contraband count because Tramontini, who had become his partner in all important gambling transactions, contrived to obtain for him from the prince the rank of captain in the service of their Imperial and Royal Majesties, and in less than three weeks Afflisio wore the uniform and the insignia of his grade. When I left Vienna, he possessed one hundred thousand florins. Their Majesties were fond of gambling but not of punting. The Emperor had a creature of his own to hold the bank. He was a kind, magnificent but not extravagant prince. I saw him in his grand imperial costume and was surprised to see him dressed in the Spanish fashion. I almost fancied I had before my eyes Charles V of Spain, who had established that etiquette which was still in existence, although after him no emperor had been a Spaniard and Francis I had nothing in common with that nation.

In Poland some years afterwards I saw the same caprice at the coronation of Stanislas Augustus Poniatowski, and the old palatine noblemen almost broke their hearts at the sight of that costume; but they had to show as good a countenance as they could, for under Russian despotism the only privilege they enjoyed was that of resignation.

The Emperor Francis I was handsome and would have looked so under the hood of a monk, as well as under an imperial crown. He had every possible consideration for his wife and allowed her to get the state into debt because he possessed the art of becoming himself the creditor of the state. He favoured commerce because it filled his coffers. He was rather addicted to gallantry, and the Empress, who always called him "master," feigned not to notice it because she did not want the world to know that her charms could no longer captivate her royal spouse, and the more so that the beauty of her numerous family was generally admired. All the archduchesses except the eldest seemed to me very handsome; but amongst the sons I had the opportunity of seeing only the eldest, and I thought the expression of his face bad and unpleasant, in spite of the contrary opinion of Abbé Grosse-Tête, who prided himself upon being a good physiognomist.

"What do you see," he asked me one day, "on the countenance of that prince?"

"Self-conceit and suicide."

It was a prophecy, for Joseph II positively killed himself, although not wilfully, and it was his self-conceit which prevented him from knowing it. He was not wanting in learning, but the knowledge which he believed himself to possess destroyed the learning which he had in

reality. He delighted in talking with those who did not know how to answer him, whether because they were amazed at his arguments or because they pretended to be so; but he called "pedants" and avoided all persons who by true reasoning pulled down the weak scaffolding of his arguments. Seven years ago I happened to meet him at Luxemburg, and he spoke to me with just contempt of a man who had exchanged immense sums of money and a great deal of debasing meanness against some miserable parchments, and he added, "I despise men who purchase nobility."

"Your Majesty is right, but what are we to think of those who sell it?"

After that question he turned his back upon me, and thenceforth he thought me unworthy of being spoken to.

The great passion of that king was to see those who listened to him laugh, whether with sincerity or with affectation, when he related something; he could narrate well and amplify in a very amusing manner all the particulars of an anecdote; but he called anyone who did not laugh at his jests a fool, and that was always the person who understood him best. He gave the preference to the opinion of Brombilla, who encouraged his suicide, over that of the physicians who were directing him according to reason. Nevertheless, no one ever denied his claim to great courage; but he had no idea whatever of the art of government, for he had not the slightest knowledge of the human heart and could neither dissemble nor keep a secret; he had so little control over his own countenance that he could not even conceal the pleasure he felt in punishing, and, when he saw anyone whose features did not please him, he could not help making a wry face which disfigured him greatly.

Joseph II sank under a truly cruel disease, which left him until the last moment the faculty of arguing upon everything, at the same time that he knew his death to be certain. This prince must have felt the misery of repenting everything he had done and of seeing the impossibility of undoing it, partly because it was irreparable, partly because, if he had undone through reason what he had done through senselessness, he would have thought himself dishonoured, for he must have clung to the last to the belief of the infallibility attached to his high birth, in spite of the state of languor of his soul, which ought to have proved to him the weakness and the fallibility of his nature. He had the greatest esteem for his brother, who has now succeeded him, but he had not the courage to follow the advice which that brother gave him. An impulse worthy of a great soul made him bestow a large reward upon the physician, a man of intelligence, who pronounced his sentence of death, but a completely opposite weakness had prompted him, a few months before, to load with benefits the doctors and the quack who made him believe that they had cured him. He must likewise have felt the misery of knowing that he would not be regretted after his death—a grievous thought, especially for a sovereign. His niece, whom he loved dearly, died before him, and, if he had had the affection of those who surrounded him, they would have spared him that fearful information,

for it was evident that his end was near at hand and no one could have dreaded his anger for keeping that event from him.

Although very much pleased with Vienna and with the pleasures I enjoyed with the beautiful *fräuleins* whose acquaintance I had made at the house of the baroness, I was thinking of leaving that agreeable city when Baron Vais, meeting me at Count Durazzo's wedding, invited me to join a picnic at Schöenbrunn. I went and failed to observe the laws of temperance; the consequence was that I returned to Vienna with such a severe indigestion that in twenty-four hours I was at the point of death.

I made use of the last particle of intelligence left in me by the disease to save my own life. Campioni, Roquendorf and Sarotin were by my bedside. M. Sarotin, who felt great friendship for me, had brought a physician, although I had most positively declared that I would not see one. That disciple of Sangrado, thinking that he could allow full sway to the despotism of science, had sent for a surgeon, and they were going to bleed me against my will. I was half-dead; I do not know by what strange inspiration I opened my eyes and saw a man standing lancet in hand and preparing to open the vein.

"No, no!" I said.

And I languidly withdrew my arm; but the tormentor wishing, as the physician expressed it, to restore me to life in spite of myself, got hold of my arm again. I suddenly felt my strength returning, put my hand forward, seized one of my pistols, fired, and the ball cut off one of the locks of his hair. That was enough; everybody ran away, with the exception of my servant, who did not abandon me and gave me as much water as I wanted to drink. On the fourth day I had recovered my usual good health.

That adventure amused all the idlers of Vienna for several days, and Abbé Grosse-Tête assured me that, if I had killed the poor surgeon, it would not have gone any further because all the witnesses present in my room at the time would have declared that he wanted to use violence to bleed me, which made it a case of legitimate self-defence. I was likewise told by several persons that all the physicians in Vienna were of opinion that, if I had been bled, I should have been a dead man; but, if drinking water had not saved me, those gentlemen would certainly not have expressed the same opinion. I felt, however, that I had to be careful and not to fall ill in the capital of Austria, for it was likely that I should not have found a physician without difficulty. At the opera a great many persons wished after that to make my acquaintance, and I was looked upon as a man who had fought, pistol in hand, against death. A miniature-painter named Morol, who was subject to indigestions and who was at last killed by one, had taught me his system, which was that, to cure those attacks, all that was necessary was to drink plenty of water and be patient. He died because he was bled once when he could not oppose any resistance.

My indigestion reminded me of a witty saying of a man who was not much in the habit of uttering many of them—I mean M. de

Maisonrouge, who was taken home one day almost dying from a severe attack of indigestion; his carriage having been stopped opposite the Quinze-Vingts by some obstruction, a poor man came up and begged alms, saying, "Sir, I am starving."

"Eh! what are you complaining of?" answered Maisonrouge, sighing deeply. "I wish I were in your place, you rogue!"

At that time I made the acquaintance of a Milanese dancer, who had wit, excellent manners, a literary education and, what is more, great beauty. She received very good society and did the honours of her drawing-room marvellously well. I became acquainted at her house with Count Christopher Erdodi, an amiable, wealthy and generous man, and with a certain Prince Kinski, who had all the grace of a harlequin. That girl inspired me with love, but in vain, for she was herself enamoured of a dancer from Florence, called Argiolini. I courted her, but she only laughed at me, for an actress, if in love with someone, is a fortress which cannot be taken unless you build a bridge of gold, and I was not rich. Yet I did not despair and kept on burning my incense at her feet. She liked my society because she used to show me the letters she wrote, and I was very careful to admire her style. She had her own portrait in miniature, which was an excellent likeness. The day before my departure, vexed at having wasted my time and my amorous compliments, I made up my mind to steal that portrait—a slight compensation for not having won the original. As I was taking leave of her, I saw the portrait within my reach, seized it and left Vienna for Presburg, where Baron Vais had invited me to accompany him and several lovely *fräuleins* on a party of pleasure.

When we got out of the carriages, the first person I tumbled upon was the Chevalier de Talvis, the protector of Madame Condé-Labré, whom I had treated so well in Paris. The moment he saw me, he came up and told me that I owed him his revenge.

"I promise to give it to you, but I never leave one pleasure for another," I answered. "We shall see one another again."

"That is enough. Will you do me the honour to introduce me to these ladies?"

"Very willingly, but not in the street."

We went inside the hotel and he followed us. Thinking that the man, who after all was as brave as a French chevalier, might amuse us, I presented him to my friends. He had been staying at the same hotel for a couple of days, and he was in mourning. He asked us if we intended to go to the prince-bishop's ball; it was the first news we had of it. Vais answered affirmatively.

"One can attend it," said Talvis, "without being presented, and that is why I intend to go, for I am not known to anybody here."

He left us, and the landlord, having come in to receive our orders, gave us some particulars respecting the ball. Our lovely *fräuleins* expressing the wish to attend it, we made up our minds to gratify them.

We were not known to anyone and were rambling through the apartments when we arrived before a large table, at which the prince-bishop

was holding a faro bank. The pile of gold that the noble prelate had before him could not have been less than thirteen or fourteen thousand florins. The Chevalier de Talvis was standing between two ladies, to whom he was whispering sweet words, while the prelate was shuffling the cards. The prince, looking at the chevalier, took it into his head to ask him, in a most engaging manner, to risk a card.

"Willingly, my lord," said Talvis. "The whole of the bank upon this card."

"Very well," answered the prelate, to show that he was not afraid.

He dealt, Talvis won, and my lucky Frenchman, with the greatest coolness, filled his pockets with the prince's gold. The bishop, astonished and seeing but rather late how foolish he had been, said to the chevalier, "Sir, if you had lost, how would you have managed to pay me?"

"My lord, that is my business."

"You are more lucky than wise."

"Most likely, my lord; but that is my business."

Seeing that the chevalier was on the point of leaving, I followed him and at the bottom of the stairs, after congratulating him, asked him to lend me a hundred sovereigns. He gave them to me at once, assuring me that he was delighted to have it in his power to oblige me.

"I will give you my bill."

"Nothing of the sort."

I put the gold into my pocket, caring very little for the crowd of masked persons whom curiosity had brought around the lucky winner and who had witnessed the transaction. Talvis went away, and I returned to the ballroom.

Roquendorf and Sarotin, who were amongst the guests, having heard that the chevalier had handed me some gold, asked me who he was. I gave them an answer half true and half false and told them that the gold I had just received was the payment of a sum I had lent him in Paris. Of course they could not help believing me—or, at least, pretending to do so.

When we returned to the inn, the landlord informed us that the chevalier had left the city on horseback as fast as he could gallop and that a small travelling bag was all his luggage. We sat down to supper, and, in order to make our meal more cheerful, I told Vais and our charming *fräuleins* the manner in which I had known Talvis and how I had contrived to get my share of what he had won.

On our arrival in Vienna the adventure was already known; people admired the Frenchman and laughed at the bishop. I was not spared by public rumour, but I took no notice of it, for I did not think it necessary to defend myself. No one knew the Chevalier de Talvis, and the French ambassador was not even acquainted with his name. I do not know whether he was ever heard of again.

I left Vienna in a post-chaise after I had said farewell to my friends, ladies and gentlemen, and on the fourth day I slept in Trieste. The next day I sailed for Venice, which I reached in the afternoon, two days before Ascension Day. After an absence of three years I had the happi-

ness of embracing my beloved protector, M. de Bragadin, and his two inseparable friends, who were delighted to see me in good health and well equipped.

CHAPTER 34

I FOUND myself again in my native country with that feeling of delight which is experienced by all true-hearted men when they see again the place in which they have received the first lasting impressions. I had acquired some experience; I knew the laws of honour and politeness; in a word, I felt myself superior to most of my equals and longed to resume my old habits and pursuits, but I intended to adopt a more regular and reserved line of conduct.

I saw with great pleasure, as I entered my study, the perfect *status quo* which had been preserved there. My papers, covered with a thick layer of dust, testified well enough that no strange hand had ever meddled with them.

Two days after my arrival, as I was getting ready to accompany the Bucentoro, on which the Doge was going as usual to wed the Adriatic—the widow of so many husbands and yet as young as on the first day of her creation—a gondolier brought me a letter. It was from M. Giovanni Grimani, a young nobleman, who, well aware that he had no right to command me, begged me in the most polite manner to call at his house to receive a letter which had been entrusted to him for delivery into my own hands. I went to him immediately, and after the usual compliments he handed me a letter with a flying seal, which he had received the day before.

Here are the contents:

“Sir:

“Having made a useless search for my portrait after you left and not being in the habit of receiving thieves in my apartment, I feel satisfied that it must be in your possession. I request you to deliver it to the person who will hand you this letter. Fogliazzi.”

Happening to have the portrait with me, I took it out of my pocket and gave it at once to M. Grimani, who received it with a mixture of satisfaction and surprise, for he had evidently thought that the commission entrusted to him would be more difficult to fulfil, and he remarked, “Love has most likely made a thief of you, but I congratulate you, for your passion cannot be a very ardent one.”

“How can you judge of that?”

“From the readiness with which you give up this portrait.”

“I would not have given it up so easily to anybody else.”

“I thank you and as a compensation beg you to accept my friendship.”

“I place it in my estimation infinitely above the portrait, and even above the original. May I ask you to forward my answer?”

“I promise you to send it. Here is some paper, write your letter; you need not seal it.”

I wrote the following words:

"In getting rid of the portrait, Casanova experiences a satisfaction by far superior to that which he felt when, owing to a stupid fancy, he was foolish enough to put it in his pocket."

Bad weather having compelled the authorities to postpone the wonderful wedding until the following Sunday, I accompanied M. de Bragadin, who was going to Padua. The amiable old man ran away from the noisy pleasures which no longer suited his age, and he was going to spend in peace the few days which the public rejoicings would have rendered unpleasant to him in Venice. On the following Saturday, after dinner, I bade him farewell and got into the post-chaise to return to Venice. If I had left Padua two minutes sooner or later, the whole course of my life would have been altered, and my destiny, if destiny is truly shaped by fatal combinations, would have been very different. But the reader can judge for himself.

Having therefore left Padua at the very instant marked by fatality, I met at Oriago a cabriolet, drawn at full speed by two post-horses, containing a very pretty woman and a man wearing a German uniform. Within a few yards from me the vehicle was suddenly upset on the side of the river, and the woman, falling over the officer, was in great danger of rolling into the Brenta. I jumped out of my chaise without even stopping my postillion and, rushing to the assistance of the lady, remedied with a chaste hand the disorder caused to her toilette by her fall.

Her companion, who had picked himself up without any injury, hastened towards us, and there was the lovely creature sitting on the ground thoroughly amazed and less embarrassed by her fall than by the indiscretion of her petticoats. In the warmth of her thanks, which lasted until her postillion and mine had righted the cabriolet, she often called me her "saviour," her "guardian angel."

The vehicle being all right, the lady continued her journey towards Padua, and I resumed mine towards Venice, which I reached just in time to dress for the opera.

The next day I masked myself early to accompany the Bucentoro, which, favoured by fine weather, was to be taken to the Lido for the great and ridiculous ceremony. The whole affair is under the responsibility of the admiral of the arsenal, who answers for the weather remaining fine, under penalty of his head, for the slightest contrary wind might capsize the ship and drown the Doge, with all the most serene noblemen, the ambassadors and the Pope's nuncio, who is the sponsor of that burlesque wedding which the Venetians respect even to superstition. To crown the misfortune of such an accident, it would make the whole of Europe laugh, and people would not fail to say that the Doge of Venice had gone at last to consummate his marriage.

I had removed my mask and was drinking some coffee under the *procuraties* of St. Mark's Square when a fine-looking female mask struck me gallantly on the shoulder with her fan. As I did not know who she was, I did not take much notice of it and, after I had finished my coffee, put on my mask and walked towards the Spiaggia del Sepul-

cro, where M. de Bragadin's gondola was waiting for me. As I was getting near the Ponte della Paglia, I saw the same masked woman attentively looking at some wonderful monster shown for a few pence. I went up to her and asked why she had struck me with her fan.

"To punish you for not knowing me again after having saved my life."

I guessed that she was the person I had rescued the day before on the banks of the Brenta, and, after paying her some compliments, I inquired whether she intended to follow the Bucentoro.

"I should like it," she said, "if I had a safe gondola."

I offered her mine, which was one of the largest, and, after consulting a masked person who accompanied her, she accepted. Before stepping in, I invited them to take off their masks, but they told me that they wished to remain unknown. I then begged them to tell me if they belonged to the suite of some ambassador, because in that case I should be compelled, much to my regret, to withdraw my invitation; but they assured me they were both Venetians. The gondola belonging to a patrician, I might have committed myself with the State Inquisitors, a thing which I wished particularly to avoid.

We were following the Bucentoro, and, seated near the lady, I allowed myself a few slight liberties, but she foiled my intentions by changing her seat. After the ceremony we returned to Venice, and the officer who accompanied the lady told me that I would oblige them by dining in their company at The Savage. I accepted, for I felt somewhat curious about the woman. What I had seen of her at the time of her fall warranted my curiosity. The officer left me alone with her and went before us to order dinner.

As soon as I was alone with her, emboldened by the mask, I told her that I was in love with her, that I had a box at the opera, which I placed entirely at her disposal, and that, if she would only give me the hope that I was not wasting my time and my attentions, I would remain her humble servant during the carnival.

"If you mean to be cruel," I added, "pray say so candidly."

"I must ask you to tell me what sort of woman you take me for?"

"For a very charming one, whether a princess or a maid of low degree. Therefore I hope you will give me this very day some marks of your kindness, or I must part with you immediately after dinner."

"You will do as you please, but I trust that after dinner you will have changed your opinion and your language, for your way of speaking is not pleasant. It seems to me that, before venturing upon such an explanation, it is necessary to know one another. Do you not think so?"

"Yes, I do; but I am afraid of being deceived."

"How very strange! And that fear makes you begin by what ought to be the end?"

"I beg to-day for only one encouraging word. Give it to me and I will at once be modest, obedient, and discreet."

"Pray calm yourself."

We found the officer waiting for us before the door of The Savage,

and we went upstairs. The moment we were in the room, she took off her mask, and I thought her more beautiful than the day before. I wanted only to ascertain, for the sake of form and etiquette, whether the officer was her husband, her lover, a relative or a protector, because, used as I was to gallant adventures, I wished to know the nature of the one in which I was embarking.

We sat down to dinner, and the manners of the gentleman and lady made it necessary for me to be careful. It was to him that I offered my box, and it was accepted; but, as I had none, I went out after dinner under pretence of some engagement, in order to get one at the *opera buffa*, where Petrici and Lasqui were then the shining stars. After the opera I gave them a good supper at an inn and took them home in my gondola. Thanks to the darkness of the night, I obtained from the pretty woman all the favours which can be granted by the side of a third person who has to be treated with caution. As we parted company, the officer said, "You shall hear from me to-morrow."

"Where and how?"

"Never mind that."

The next morning the servant announced an officer; it was my man. After we had exchanged the usual compliments, after I had thanked him for the honour he had done me the day before, I asked him to tell me his name. He answered me in the following manner, speaking with great fluency but without looking at me:

"My name is P— C—. My father is rich and enjoys great consideration at the exchange; but we are not on friendly terms at present. I reside in St. Mark's Square. The lady you saw with me was a Mlle. O—; she is the wife of the broker C—, and her sister married the patrician P— M—. But Madame C— is at variance with her husband on my account, just as she is the cause of my quarrel with my father.

"I wear this uniform in virtue of a captaincy in the Austrian service, but I have never served in reality. I have the contract for the supply of oxen to the city of Venice, and I get the cattle from Styria and Hungary. This contract gives me a net profit of ten thousand florins a year; but an unforeseen embarrassment, which I must remedy, fraudulent bankruptcy and some extraordinary expenditure, place me for the present in monetary difficulties. Four years ago I heard a great deal about you and wished very much to make your acquaintance; I firmly believe that it was through the interference of Heaven that we became acquainted day before yesterday. I have no hesitation in claiming from you an important service which will unite us by the ties of the warmest friendship. Come to my assistance without running any risk yourself; back these three bills of exchange. You need not be afraid of having to pay them, for I will leave in your hands these three other bills which fall due before the first. Besides, I will give you a mortgage upon the proceeds of my contract during the whole year, so that, should I fail to take up these bills, you could seize my cattle in Trieste, which is the only road through which they can come."

Astonished at his speech and at his proposal, which seemed to me

a lure and made me fear a world of trouble (which I have always abhorred), struck by the strange idea of that man who, thinking that I would easily fall into the snare, gave me the preference over so many other persons whom he certainly knew better than me, I did not hesitate to tell him that I would never accept his offer. He then had recourse to all his eloquence to persuade me, but I embarrassed him greatly by telling him how surprised I was at his giving me the preference over all his other acquaintances when I had had the honour to know him for only two days.

"Sir," he said, with barefaced impudence, "having recognised in you a man of great intelligence, I felt certain that you would at once see the advantages of my offer and would not raise any objection."

"You must see your mistake by this time, and most likely you will take me for a fool, now that you see I should believe myself a dupe if I accepted."

He left me with an apology for having troubled me, and, saying that he hoped to see me in the evening at St. Mark's Square, where he would be with Madame C—, he gave me his address, telling me he had retained possession of his apartment unknown to his father. This was as much as to say that he expected me to return his visit, but, if I had been prudent, I should not have done so.

Disgusted at the manner in which that man had attempted to get hold of me, I no longer felt any inclination to try my fortune with his mistress, for it seemed evident that they were conspiring together to make a dupe of me, and, as I had no wish to afford them that gratification I avoided them in the evening. It would have been wise to have kept to that line of conduct; but the next day, obeying my evil genius and thinking that a polite call could not have any consequences, I called upon them.

A servant having taken me to his room, he gave me the most cordial welcome and reproached me in a friendly manner for not having shown myself the evening before. After that he spoke again of his affairs and made me look at a heap of papers and documents; I found it very wearisome.

"If you make up your mind to sign the three bills of exchange," he said, "I will take you as a partner in my contract."

By this extraordinary mark of friendship, he was offering me—at least he said so—an income of five thousand florins a year; but my only answer was to beg that the matter should never be mentioned again. I was going to take leave of him when he said that he wished to introduce me to his mother and sister.

He left the room and came back with them. The mother was a respectable, simple-looking woman, but the daughter was a perfect beauty; she literally dazzled me. After a few minutes, the over-trustful mother begged leave to retire, and her daughter remained. In less than half an hour I was captivated; her perfection delighted me; her lively wit, her artless reasoning, her candour, her ingenuousness, her natural and noble feelings, her cheerful and innocent quickness, that

harmony which arises from beauty, wit and innocence and which had always the most powerful influence over me—everything, in fact, conspired to make me the slave of the most perfect woman the wildest dreams could imagine.

Mlle. C— C— never went out without her mother, who, although very pious, was full of kind indulgence. She read no books but those of her father, a serious man who had no novels in his library, and she was longing to read some tales of romance. She had likewise a great wish to know Venice; and, as no one visited the family, she had never been told that she was truly a prodigy of beauty. Her brother wrote while I conversed with her or, rather, answered all the questions which she addressed to me and which I could satisfy only by developing the ideas she already had and was herself amazed to find in her own mind, for her soul had until then been unconscious of its own powers. Yet I did not tell her that she was lovely and that she interested me in the highest degree, because I had so often said the same to other women, and without truth, that I was afraid of raising her suspicions.

I left the house with a sensation of dreamy sadness; feeling deeply moved by the rare qualities I had discovered in that charming girl, I promised myself not to see her again, for I hardly thought myself the man to sacrifice my liberty entirely and ask her in marriage, although I certainly believed her endowed with all the qualities necessary to minister to my happiness.

I had not seen Madame Manzoni since my return to Venice, and I went to pay her a visit. I found the worthy woman the same as she had always been towards me, and she gave me the most affectionate welcome. She told me that Thérèse Imer, that pretty girl who had caused M. de Malipiero to strike me thirteen years before, had just returned from Bayreuth, where the Margrave had made her fortune. As she lived in the house opposite, Madame Manzoni, who wanted to enjoy her surprise, sent her word to come over. She came almost immediately, holding by the hand a little boy of eight years, a lovely child and the only one she had given to her husband, who was a dancer in Bayreuth. Our surprise at seeing one another again was equal to the pleasure we experienced in reminding one another of what had occurred in our young days; it is true that we had but trifles to recall. I congratulated her upon her good fortune, and, judging of my position from external appearances, she thought it right to congratulate me, but her fortune would have been established on a firmer basis than mine if she had followed a prudent line of conduct. She unfortunately indulged in numerous caprices, with which my readers will become acquainted. She was an excellent musician, but her fortune was not altogether owing to her talent; her charms had done more for her than anything else. She told me her adventures, very likely with some restrictions, and we parted after a conversation of two hours. She invited me to breakfast for the following day. She told me that the Margrave had her narrowly watched, but that, being an old acquaintance, I was not likely to give

rise to any suspicion—that is the aphorism of all women addicted to gallantry. She added that I could, if I liked, see her that same evening in her box, and that M. Papafava, who was her godfather, would be glad to see me. I called at her house early the next morning and found her in bed with her son, who, thanks to the principles in which he had been educated, got up and left the room as soon as he saw me seated near his mother's bed. I spent three hours with her, and I recollect that the last was delightful; the reader will know the consequence of that pleasant hour later. I saw her a second time during the fortnight she passed in Venice, and, when she left, I promised to pay her a visit in Bayreuth, but I never kept my promise.

I had at that time to attend to the affairs of my posthumous brother, who had, as he said, a call from Heaven to the priesthood, but he wanted a patrimony. Although he was ignorant and devoid of any merit save a handsome face, he thought that an ecclesiastical career would insure his happiness, and he depended a great deal upon his preaching, for which, according to the opinion of the women with whom he was acquainted, he had a decided talent. I took everything into my hands and succeeded in obtaining for him a patrimony from M. Grimani, who still owed us the value of the furniture in my father's house, of which he had never rendered any account. He transferred to him a life-interest in a house in Venice, and two years afterwards my brother was ordained. But the patrimony was only fictitious, the house being already mortgaged; the Abbé Grimani was, however, a kind of Jesuit, and those sainted servants of God think that all is well that ends well and profitably to themselves. I shall speak again of my unlucky brother, whose destiny became involved with mine.

Two days had passed since I had paid my visit to P— C— when I met him in the street. He told me that his sister was constantly speaking of me, that she quoted a great many things which I had told her and that his mother was much pleased at her daughter having made my acquaintance. "She would be a good match for you," he added, "for she will have a dowry of ten thousand ducats. If you will call on me to-morrow, we will take coffee with my mother and sister."

I had promised myself never again to enter his house, but I broke my word. It is easy enough for a man to forget his promises under such circumstances.

I spent three hours in conversation with the charming girl, and, when I left her, I was deeply in love. As I went away, I told her that I envied the destiny of the man who would have her for his wife, and my compliment, the first she had ever received, made her blush.

After I had left her, I began to examine the nature of my feelings towards her, and they frightened me, for I could behave towards Mlle. C— C— neither as an honest man nor as a libertine. I could not hope to obtain her hand, and I almost fancied that I would stab anyone who advised me to seduce her. I felt that I wanted some diversion; I went to the gaming-table. Playing is sometimes an excellent lenitive to calm the mind and smother the ardent fire of love. I played with

wonderful luck and was going home with plenty of gold when in a solitary narrow street I met a man bent down less by age than by the heavy weight of misery. As I came near him, I recognised Count Bonafede, the sight of whom moved me with pity. He recognised me likewise. We talked for some time, and at last he told me the state of abject poverty to which he was reduced and the great difficulty he had to keep his numerous family. "I do not blush," he added, "in begging from you one sequin, which will keep us alive for five or six days." I immediately gave him ten, trying to prevent him from lowering himself in his anxiety to express his gratitude, but I could not prevent him from shedding tears. As we parted, he told me that what made him most miserable was to see the position of his daughter, who had become a great beauty and would rather die than make a sacrifice of her virtue. "I can neither support her in those feelings," he said, with a sigh, "nor reward her for them."

Thinking that I understood the wishes with which misery had inspired him, I took his address and promised to pay him a visit. I was curious to see what had become of a virtue of which I did not entertain a very high opinion. I called the next day. I found a house almost bare of furniture and the daughter alone—a circumstance which did not astonish me. The young countess had seen me arrive and received me on the stairs in the most amiable manner. She was pretty well dressed, and I thought her handsome, agreeable and lively, as she had been when I made her acquaintance in Fort St. André. Her father having announced my visit, she was in high spirits and kissed me with such tenderness as if I had been a beloved lover. She took me to her own room, and, after she had informed me that her mother was ill in bed and unable to see me, she gave way again to the transport of joy which, as she said, she felt in seeing me again. The ardour of our mutual kisses, given at first under the auspices of friendship, was not long in exciting our senses to such an extent that in less than a quarter of an hour I had nothing more to desire. When it was all over, it became us both, of course, to be—or at least to appear to be—surprised at what had taken place, and I could not honestly hesitate to assure the poor countess that it was only the first token of a true and constant love. She believed it, or feigned to believe it, and perhaps I myself fancied it was true—for the moment. When we had become calm again, she told me the fearful state to which they were reduced, her brothers walking barefooted in the streets and her father having positively no bread to give them.

"Then you have no lover?"

"What! a lover! Where could I find a man courageous enough to be my lover in such a house as this? Am I a woman to sell myself to the firstcomer for the sum of thirty sous? There is not a man in Venice who would think me worth more than that, seeing me in such a place as this. Besides, I was not born for prostitution."

Such a conversation was not very cheerful; she was weeping, and the spectacle of her sadness, joined to the picture of misery which

surrounded me, was not at all the thing to excite love. I left her with a promise to call again, and I put twelve sequins in her hand. She was surprised at the amount; she had never known herself so rich before. I have always regretted I did not give her twice as much.

The next day P— C— called on me and said cheerfully that his mother had given permission to her daughter to go to the opera with him, that the young girl was delighted because she had never been there before and that, if I liked, I could wait for them at some place where they would meet me.

"But does your sister know that you intend me to join you?"

"She considers it a great pleasure."

"Does your mother know it?"

"No; but, when she knows it, she will not be angry, for she has a great esteem for you."

"In that case I will try to find a private box."

"Very well; wait for us at such a place."

The scoundrel did not speak of his letters of exchange again, and, as he saw that I was no longer paying my attentions to his mistress and was in love with his sister, he had formed the fine project of selling her to me. I pitied the mother and the daughter who had confidence in such a man but I had not the courage to resist the temptation. I even went so far as to persuade myself that, as I loved her, it was my duty to accept the offer, in order to save her from other snares for, if I had declined, her brother might have found some other man less scrupulous, and I could not bear the idea. I thought that in my company her innocence ran no risk.

I took a box at the St. Samuel Opera and was waiting for them at the appointed place long before the time. They came at last, and the sight of my young friend delighted me. She was elegantly masked, and her brother wore his uniform. In order not to expose the lovely girl to being recognised on account of her brother, I made them get into my gondola. He insisted upon being landed near the house of his mistress, who was ill, he said, and he added that he would soon join us in our box. I was astonished that C— C— did not show any surprise or repugnance at remaining alone with me in the gondola; but I did not think the conduct of her brother extraordinary, for it was evident that it was all arranged beforehand in his mind.

I told C— C— that we would remain in the gondola until the opening of the theatre and that, as the heat was intense, she would do well to take off her mask, which she did at once. The law I had laid upon myself to respect her, the noble confidence which was beaming on her countenance and in her looks, her innocent joy—everything increased the ardour of my love.

Not knowing what to say to her, for I could speak to her of nothing but love—and it was a delicate subject—I kept looking at her charming face, not daring to let my eyes rest upon two budding globes shaped by the Graces, for fear of giving the alarm to her modesty.

"Speak to me," she said at last. "You only look at me without utter-

ing a single word. You have sacrificed yourself for me, because my brother would have taken you with him to his lady-love, who, to judge from what he says, must be as beautiful as an angel."

"I have seen that lady."

"I suppose she is very witty."

"She may be so, but I have no opportunity of knowing, for I have never visited her and do not intend ever to call upon her. Do not therefore imagine, beautiful C—, that I have made the slightest sacrifice for your sake."

"I was afraid you had because, as you did not speak, I thought you were sad."

"If I do not speak to you, it is because I am too deeply moved by your angelic confidence in me."

"I am very glad it is so, but how could I not trust you? I feel much more free, much more confident with you than with my brother himself. My mother says it is impossible to be mistaken and that you are certainly an honourable man. Besides, you are not married; that is the first thing I asked my brother. Do you recollect telling me that you envied the fate of the man who would have me for his wife? Well, at that very moment I was thinking that your wife would be the happiest woman in Venice."

These words, uttered with the most candid artlessness and with that tone of sincerity which comes from the heart, had upon me an effect which it would be difficult to describe; I suffered because I could not imprint the most loving kiss upon the sweet lips which had just pronounced them, but at the same time it caused me the most delicious felicity to see that such an angel loved me.

"With such conformity of feelings," I said, "we would, lovely C—, be perfectly happy if we could be united forever. But I am old enough to be your father."

"You my father? You are joking! Do you know that I am fourteen?"

"Do you know that I am twenty-eight?"

"Well, where can you see a man of your age having a daughter of mine? If my father were like you, he would certainly never frighten me; I could not keep anything from him."

The hour to go to the theatre had come; we landed, and the performance engrossed all her attention. Her brother did not join us until it was nearly over; this had certainly been a part of his calculation. I took them to an inn for supper, and the pleasure I experienced in seeing the charming girl eat with a good appetite made me forget that I had had no dinner. I hardly spoke during the supper, for love made me sick and I was in a state of excitement which could not last long. In order to excuse my silence, I feigned to be suffering from the toothache.

After supper P— C— told his sister that I was in love with her and that I should certainly feel better if she would allow me to kiss her. The only answer of the innocent girl was to offer me her laughing lips, which seemed to call for kisses. I was burning, but my respect for

that innocent and naïve young creature was such that I only kissed her cheek, and even that in a manner very cold in appearance.

"What a kiss!" exclaimed P— C—. "Come, come, a good lover's kiss!"

I did not move; the impudent fellow annoyed me; but his sister, turning her head aside sadly, said, "Do not press him; I am not so fortunate as to please him."

That remark gave the alarm to my love; I could no longer master my feelings.

"What!" I exclaimed warmly, "what, beautiful C—! you do not condescend to ascribe my reserve to the feeling which you have inspired me with? You suppose that you do not please me? If a kiss is all that is needed to prove the contrary to you, oh! receive it now with all the sentiment that is burning in my heart!"

Then, folding her in my arms and pressing her lovingly against my breast, I imprinted on her mouth the long and ardent kiss which I had so much wished to give her; but the nature of that kiss made the timid dove feel that she had fallen into the vulture's claws. She escaped from my arms, amazed at having discovered my love in such a manner. Her brother expressed his approval, while she replaced her mask over her face in order to conceal her confusion. I asked her whether she had any longer any doubts as to my love.

"You have convinced me," she answered, "but, because you have undeceived me, you must not punish me."

I thought that this was a very delicate answer, dictated by true sentiment; but her brother was not pleased with it and said it was foolish. We put on our masks, left the inn, and, after I had escorted them to their house, I went home deeply in love, happy in my inmost soul, yet very sad.

The reader will learn in the following chapter the progress of my love and the adventures in which I found myself engaged.

CHAPTER 35

THE next morning, P— C— called on me with an air of triumph; he told me that his sister had confessed to her mother that we loved one another and that, if she was ever to be married, she would be unhappy with any other husband.

"I adore your sister," I said to him, "but do you think your father will be willing to give her to me?"

"I think not; but he is old. In the meantime, love one another. My mother has given her permission to go to the opera this evening with us."

"Very well, my dear friend, we must go."

"I find myself under the necessity of claiming a slight service at your hands."

"I am at your disposal."

"There is some excellent Cyprus wine to be sold very cheap, and I can obtain a cask of it against my bill at six months. I am certain of selling it again immediately with a good profit, but the merchant requires a guarantee, and he is disposed to accept yours, if you will give it. Will you be kind enough to endorse my note of hand?"

"With pleasure."

I signed my name without hesitation, for where is the man in love who in such a case would have refused that service to a person who, to revenge himself, might have made him miserable? We made an appointment for the evening, and parted highly pleased with each other.

After I had dressed, I went out and bought a dozen pairs of gloves, as many pairs of silk stockings and a pair of garters embroidered in gold and with gold clasps, promising myself much pleasure in offering that first present to my young friend.

I need not say that I was punctual in reaching the appointed place, but they were there already, waiting for me. Had I not suspected the intentions of P— C—, their coming so early would have been very flattering to my vanity. The moment I had joined them, P— C— told me that, having other engagements to fulfil, he would leave his sister with me and meet us at the theatre in the evening. When he had gone, I told C— C— that we would sail in a gondola until the opening of the theatre.

"No," she answered, "let us rather go to the Zuecca Garden."

"With all my heart."

I hired a gondola, and we went to St. Blaze, where I knew a very pretty garden, which for one sequin was placed at my disposal for the remainder of the day, with the express condition that no one else would be allowed admittance. We had not had any dinner, and, after I had ordered a good meal, we went up to a room where we took off our disguises and masks, after which we went to the garden.

My lovely C— C— had nothing on but a bodice made of light silk and a skirt of the same description, but she was charming in that simple costume! My amorous looks went through those light veils, and in my imagination I saw her entirely naked! I sighed with burning desires, with a mixture of discreet reserve and voluptuous love.

The moment we had reached the long avenue, my young companion, as lively as a fawn, finding herself at liberty on the green sward and enjoying that happy freedom for the first time in her life, began to run about and to give way to the spirit of cheerfulness which was natural to her. When she was compelled to stop for want of breath, she burst out laughing at seeing me gazing at her in a sort of ecstatic silence. She then challenged me to run a race; the game was very agreeable to me. I accepted but proposed to make it interesting by a wager.

"Whoever loses the race," I said, "shall have to do whatever the winner asks."

"Agreed!"

We marked the winning-post and made a fair start. I was certain

to win, but I lost on purpose, so as to see what she would ask me to do. At first she ran with all her might, while I reserved my strength and she was the first to reach the goal. As she was trying to recover her breath, she thought of sentencing me to a good penance: she hid herself behind a tree and told me a minute afterwards that I had to find her ring. She had concealed it about her, and that was putting me in possession of all her person. I thought it was a delightful forfeit, for I could easily see that she had chosen it with intentional mischief; but I felt I ought not to take too much advantage of her, because her artless confidence required to be encouraged. We sat on the grass, I visited her pockets, the folds of her stays, of her petticoat; then I looked in her shoes and even at her garters, which were fastened below the knees. Not finding anything, I kept on my search, and, as the ring was about her, I was of course bound to discover it. My reader has most likely guessed that I had some suspicion of the charming hiding-place in which the young beauty had concealed the ring, but, before coming to it, I wanted to enjoy myself. The ring was at last found between the two most beautiful keepers that nature had ever rounded, but I felt such emotion as I drew it out that my hand was trembling.

"What are you trembling for?" she asked.

"Only for joy at having found the ring; you had concealed it so well! But you owe me a revenge, and this time you shall not beat me."

"We shall see."

We began a new race, and, seeing that she was not running very fast, I thought I could easily distance her whenever I liked. I was mistaken. She had husbanded her strength, and, when we had run about two-thirds of the race, she suddenly sprang forward at full speed, left me behind, and I saw that I had lost. I then thought of a trick, the effect of which never fails; I feigned a heavy fall and uttered a shriek of pain. The poor child stopped at once, ran back to me in great fright and, pitying me, assisted me to raise myself from the ground. The moment I was on my feet again, I laughed heartily and, taking a spring forward, had reached the goal long before her.

The charming runner, thoroughly amazed, said to me, "Then you did not hurt yourself?"

"No, I fell purposely."

"Purposely? Oh, to deceive me! I would never have believed you capable of that! It is not fair to win by fraud; therefore I did not lose the race."

"Oh! yes, you did, for I reached the goal before you. Trick for trick; confess that you tried to deceive me at the start."

"But that is fair, and your trick is a very different thing."

"Yet it has given me the victory, and

*Vincasi per fortuna o per inganno,
Il vincer sempre fu laudabil cosa."*

"I have often heard those words from my brother, but never from my father. Well, never mind, I have lost. Give your judgment now, I will obey."

"Wait a little. Let me see. Ah! my sentence is that you shall exchange your garters for mine."

"Exchange our garters! But you have seen mine, they are ugly and worth nothing."

"Never mind. Twice every day I shall think of the person I love, and, as nearly as possible at the same hours, you will have to think of me."

"It is a very pretty idea, and I like it. Now I forgive you for having deceived me. Here are my ugly garters. Ah! my dear deceiver, how beautiful yours are! What a handsome present! How they will please my mother! They must be a present which you have just received, for they are quite new."

"No, they were not given to me. I bought them for you, and I have been racking my brain to find how I could make you accept them. Love suggested to me the idea of making them the prize of the race. You may now imagine my sorrow when I saw that you would win. Vexation inspired me with a deceitful stratagem, which arose from a feeling you had caused yourself and which turned entirely to your honour, for you must admit that you would have shown a very hard heart if you had not come to my assistance."

"And I feel certain that you would not have had recourse to that stratagem if you could have guessed how deeply it would pain me."

"Do you, then, feel much interest in me?"

"I would do anything in the world to convince you of it. I like my pretty garters exceedingly; I will never have another pair, and I promise you that my brother shall not steal them from me."

"Can you suppose him capable of such an action?"

"Oh! certainly, especially if the fastenings are of gold."

"Yes, they are of gold; but let him believe that they are of gilt brass."

"Will you teach me how to fasten my beautiful garters?"

"Of course I will."

We went upstairs, and after our dinner, which we both enjoyed with a good appetite, she became more lively and I more excited by love, but at the same time more to be pitied in consequence of the restraint to which I had condemned myself. Very anxious to try her garters, she begged me to help her, and that request was made in good faith, without mischievous coquetry. An innocent young girl who, in spite of her fifteen years, has not loved yet and who has not frequented the society of other girls does not know the violence of amorous desires or what is likely to excite them. She had no idea of the danger of a *tête-à-tête*. When a natural instinct makes her love for the first time, she believes the object of her love worthy of her confidence and thinks that, to be loved herself, she must show the most boundless trust.

Seeing that her stockings were too short to fasten the garter above

the knee, she told me that she would in future use longer ones, and I immediately offered her those that I had purchased. Full of gratitude, she sat on my lap and, in the effusion of her satisfaction, bestowed on me all the kisses she would have given to her father if he had made her such a present. I returned her kisses, forcibly keeping down the violence of my feelings. I only told her that one of her kisses was worth a kingdom. My charming C— C— took off her shoes and stockings and put on one of the pairs I had given her, which went halfway up her thigh. The more innocent I found her to be, the less I could make up my mind to possess myself of that ravishing prey.

We returned to the garden, and, after walking about until the evening, we went to the opera, taking care to keep on our masks because, the theatre being small, we might easily have been recognised, and my lovely friend was certain that her father would not allow her to come out again if he found out that she had gone to the opera.

We were rather surprised not to see her brother. On our left we had the Marquis of Montalegre, the Spanish ambassador, with his acknowledged mistress, Mlle. Bola, and in the box on our right a man and a woman who had not taken off their masks. Those two persons kept their eyes constantly fixed upon us, but my young friend did not remark it, as her back was turned towards them. During the ballet, C— C— having left the libretto of the opera on the ledge of the box, the man with the mask stretched forth his hand and took it. That proved to me that we were known to him, and I said so to my companion, who turned round and recognized her brother. The lady who was with him could be no other than Madame C—. As P— C— knew the number of our box, he had taken the next one; he could not have done so without some intention, and I foresaw that he meant to make his sister have supper with that woman. I was much annoyed, but could not prevent it without breaking off with him altogether, and I was in love.

After the second ballet he came into our box with his lady, and, after the usual exchange of compliments, the acquaintance was made, and we had to accept supper at his casino. As soon as the two ladies had thrown off their masks, they embraced one another, and the mistress of P— C— overwhelmed my young friend with compliments and attentions. At table she affected to treat her with extreme affability, and C— C—, not having any experience of the world, behaved towards her with the greatest respect. I could, however, see that Madame C—, in spite of all her art, could hardly hide the vexation she felt at the sight of the superior beauty which I had preferred to her own charms. P— C—, who was of an extravagant gaiety, launched forth in stupid jokes at which his mistress alone laughed; in my anger I shrugged my shoulders, and his sister, not understanding his jests, took no notice of them. Altogether, our *partie carrée* was not formed of congenial spirits and was rather a dull affair.

As the dessert was placed on the table, P— C—, somewhat excited by the wine he had drunk, kissed his lady-love, and challenged me to follow his example with his sister. I told him that I loved Mlle. C—

C— truly and would not take such liberties with her until I should have acquired a legal right to her favours. P— C— began to scoff at what I had said, but Madame C— stopped him. Grateful for that mark of propriety, I took out of my pocket the twelve pairs of gloves which I had bought in the morning, and, after I had begged her acceptance of a half a dozen pairs, I gave the other six to my young friend. P— C— rose from the table with a sneer, dragging along with him his mistress, who had likewise drunk rather freely, and he threw himself on a sofa with her. The scene taking a lewd turn, I placed myself in such a manner as to hide them from the view of my young friend, whom I led into the recess of a window. But I had not been able to prevent C— C— from seeing in a looking-glass the position of the two impudent wretches, and her face was suffused with blushes; I, however, spoke to her quietly of indifferent things, and, recovering her composure, she answered me, speaking of her gloves, which she was folding on the pier-table. After his brutal exploit P— C— came impudently to me and embraced me; his dissolute companion, imitating his example, kissed my young friend, saying she was certain she had seen nothing. C— C— answered modestly that she did not know what she could have seen, but the look she cast towards me made me understand all she felt. If the reader has any knowledge of the human heart, he must guess what my feelings were. How was it possible to endure such a scene going on in the presence of an innocent girl whom I adored, when I had to fight hard myself with my own burning desires so as not to abuse her innocence! I was on a bed of thorns! Anger and indignation, restrained by the reserve I was compelled to adopt for fear of losing the object of my ardent love, made me tremble all over. The inventors of hell would not have failed to place that suffering among its torments if they had known it. The lustful P— C— had thought to give me a great proof of his friendship by the disgusting action he had been guilty of, and he had reckoned as nothing the dishonour of his mistress and the delicacy of his sister, whom he had thus exposed to prostitution. I do not know how I contrived not to strangle him. The next day, when he called on me, I overwhelmed him with the most bitter reproaches, and he tried to excuse himself by saying that he never would have acted in that manner if he had not felt satisfied that I had already treated his sister in the *tête-à-tête* in the same way that he treated his mistress before us.

My love for C— C— became every instant more intense, and I had made up my mind to undertake everything necessary to save her from the fearful position into which her unworthy brother might throw her by selling her for his own profit to some man less scrupulous than I. It seemed to me urgent. What a disgusting state of things! What an unheard-of species of seduction! What a strange way to gain my friendship! And I found myself under the dire necessity of dissembling with the man whom I despised most in the world! I had been told that he was deeply in debt, that he had been a bankrupt in Vienna, where he had a wife and a family of children, that in Venice he had com-

promised his father, who had been obliged to turn him out of his house and who, out of pity, pretended not to know that he had kept his room in it. He had seduced his wife, or rather his mistress, who had been driven away by her husband, and, after he had squandered everything she possessed and he found himself at the end of his wits, he had tried to turn her prostitution to advantage. His poor mother, who idolised him, had given him everything she had, even her own clothes, and I expected him to plague me again for some loan or security, but I was firmly resolved on refusing. I could not bear the idea of C— C— being the innocent cause of my ruin and used as a tool by her brother to keep up his disgusting life.

Moved by an irresistible feeling, by what is called "perfect love," I called on P— C— the following day and, after I had told him that I adored his sister with the most honourable intentions, tried to make him realise how deeply he had grieved me by forgetting all respect and that modesty which the most inveterate libertine ought never to insult if he has any pretension to be worthy of respectable society.

"Even if I had to give up," I added, "the pleasure of seeing your angelic sister, I have taken the firm resolution of not keeping company with you, but I candidly warn you that I will do everything in my power to prevent her from going out with you and being the victim of some infamous bargain in your hands."

He excused himself again by saying that he had drunk too much and that he did not believe my love for his sister was such as to despise the gratification of my senses. He begged my pardon, he embraced me with tears in his eyes, and I would, perhaps, have given way to my own emotion, when his mother and his sister entered the room: They offered me their heartfelt thanks for the handsome present I had given to the young lady. I told the mother that I loved her daughter and that my fondest hope was to obtain her for my wife.

"In the hope of securing that happiness, madame," I added, "I shall get a friend to speak to your husband as soon as I shall have secured a position giving me sufficient means to keep her comfortably and assure her happiness."

So saying, I kissed her hand and felt so deeply moved that the tears ran down my cheeks. Those tears were sympathetic, and the excellent woman was soon crying like me. She thanked me affectionately and left me with her daughter and her son, who looked as if he had been changed into a statue.

There are a great many mothers of that kind in the world, and very often they are women who have led a virtuous life; they do not suppose that deceit can exist because their own nature understands only what is upright and true; but they are almost always the victims of their good faith and their trust in those who seem to them to be patrons of honesty. What I had told the mother surprised the daughter, but her astonishment was much greater when she heard of what I had said to her brother. After one moment of consideration she told him that, with any other man but me, she would have been ruined and that,

if she had been in the place of Madame C—, she would never have forgiven him, because the way he had treated her was as debasing for her as for himself. P— C— was weeping, but the traitor could command tears whenever he pleased.

It was Whitsunday, and, as the theatres were closed, he told me that, if I would the next day be at the same place of appointment as before, he would leave his sister with me and go by himself with Madame C—, whom he could not honourably leave alone.

"I will give you my key," he added, "and you can bring my sister back here as soon as you have supped together wherever you like."

And he handed me his key, which I had not the courage to refuse. After that he left us. I went away myself a few minutes afterwards, having previously agreed with C— C— that we would go to the Zuecca Garden on the following day.

I was punctual, and, love exciting me to the highest degree, I foresaw what would happen on that day. I had engaged a box at the opera, and we went to our garden until the evening. As it was a holiday, there were several small parties of friends sitting at various tables, and, being unwilling to mix with other people, we made up our minds to remain in the apartment which was given to us and not to go to the opera until towards the end of the performance. I therefore ordered a good supper. We had seven hours to spend together, and my charming young friend remarked that the time would certainly not seem long to us. She threw off her disguise and sat on my lap, telling me that I had completed the conquest of her heart by my reserve towards her during the supper with her brother; but all our conversation was accompanied by kisses which, little by little, were becoming more and more ardent.

"Did you see," she said to me, "what my brother did to Madame C— when she placed herself astride of his knees? I saw it only in the looking-glass, but I could guess what it was."

"Were you not afraid of my treating you in the same manner?"

"No, I can assure you. How could I possibly fear such a thing, knowing how much you love me? You would have humiliated me so deeply that I should no longer have loved you. We will wait until we are married, will we not, dear? You cannot realise the extent of the joy I felt when I heard you speak to my mother as you did! We will love each other forever. But will you explain to me, dearest, the meaning of the words embroidered upon my garters?"

"Is there any motto on them? I was not aware of it."

"Oh, yes! it is in French; pray read it."

Seated on my lap, she took off one of her garters while I was unclasping the other, and here are the two lines which I found embroidered on them and which I ought to have read before offering them to her:

*En voyant chaque jour le bijou de ma belle,
Vous lui direz qu'Amour veut qu'il lui soit fidèle.*

Those verses, rather free I must confess, struck me as very comic. I burst out laughing, and my mirth increased when, to please her, I had to translate their meaning. As it was an idea entirely new to her, I found it necessary to enter into particulars which lighted an ardent fire in our veins.

"Now," she observed, "I shall not dare to show my garters to anybody, and I am very sorry for it."

As I was rather thoughtful, she added, "Tell me what you are thinking of?"

"I am thinking that those lucky garters have a privilege which perhaps I shall never enjoy. How I wish myself in their place! I may die of that wish and die miserable."

"No, dearest, for I am in the same position as you, and I am certain to live. Besides, we can hasten our marriage. As far as I am concerned, I am ready to become your wife to-morrow if you wish it. We are both free, and my father cannot refuse his consent."

"You are right, for he would be bound to consent for the sake of his honour. But I wish to give him a mark of my respect by asking your hand, and after that everything will soon be ready. It might be in a week or ten days."

"So soon? You will see that my father will say I am too young."

"Perhaps he is right."

"No; I am young but not too young, and I am certain that I can be your wife."

I was on burning coals, and I felt that it was impossible for me to resist any longer the ardent fire which was consuming me.

"Oh, my best beloved!" I exclaimed, "do you feel certain of my love? Do you think me capable of deceiving you? Are you sure that you will never repent being my wife?"

"More than certain, darling, for you could not wish to make me unhappy."

"Well, then, let our marriage take place now. Let God alone receive our mutual pledges; we cannot have a better witness, for He knows the purity of our intentions. Let us mutually engage our faith, let us unite our destinies and be happy. We will afterwards legalise our tender love with your father's consent and with the ceremonies of the Church; in the meantime, be mine, entirely mine."

"Dispose of me, dearest. I promise to God, I promise to you that, from this very moment and forever, I will be your faithful wife; I will say the same to my father, to the priest who will bless our union—in fact, to everybody."

"I take the same oath towards you, darling, and I can assure you that we are now truly married! Come to my arms! Oh, dearest, complete my felicity."

"Oh, dear! I am indeed so near happiness!"

After kissing her tenderly, I went down to tell the mistress of the house not to disturb us and not to bring up our dinner until we called for it. During my short absence my charming C— C— had thrown

herself dressed on the bed, but I told her that the God of Love disapproved of unnecessary veils, and in less than a minute I made of her a new Eve, as beautiful in her nakedness as if she had just come out of the hands of the Supreme Artist. Her skin, as soft as satin, was dazzlingly white, and seemed still more so beside her splendid black hair, which I had spread over her alabaster shoulders. Her slender figure, her prominent hips, her beautifully modelled bosom, her large eyes, from which flashed the sparkle of amorous desire—everything about her was strikingly beautiful and presented to my hungry looks the perfection of the Mother of Love, adorned by all the charms which modesty throws over the attractions of a lovely woman.

Beside myself, I almost feared lest my felicity should not prove real or lest it should not be made perfect by complete enjoyment, when mischievous love contrived, in so serious a moment, to supply me with a reason for mirth.

"Is there by any chance a law to prevent the husband from undressing?" inquired my beautiful C— C—.

"No, darling angel, no; and, even if there were such a barbarous law, I would not submit to it."

In one instant I had thrown off all my garments, and my mistress, in her turn, gave herself up to all the impulses of natural instinct and curiosity, for every part of my body was an entirely new thing to her. At last, as if she had had enough of the pleasure her eyes were enjoying, she pressed me against her bosom and exclaimed, "Oh! dearest, what a difference between you and my pillow!"

"Your pillow, darling? You are laughing; what do you mean?"

"Oh! it is nothing but a childish fancy; I am afraid you will be angry."

"Angry! How could I be angry with you, my love, in the happiest moment of my life?"

"Well, for several days past, I could not go to sleep without holding my pillow in my arms; I caressed it; I called it 'my dear husband'; I fancied it was you, and, when a delightful enjoyment had left me without movement, I would go to sleep and in the morning find my pillow still between my arms."

My dear C— C— became my wife with the courage of a true heroine, for her intense love caused her to delight even in bodily pain. After three hours spent in delicious enjoyment, I got up and called for our supper. The repast was simple but very good. We looked at one another without speaking, for how could we find words to express our feelings? We thought that our felicity was extreme, and we enjoyed it with the certainty that we could renew it at will.

The hostess came up to inquire whether we wanted anything, and she asked if we were not going to the opera, which everybody said was so beautiful.

"Have you never been to the opera?"

"Never, because it is too dear for people in our position. My daughter has such a wish to go that—God forgive me for saying it!—she

would give herself, I truly believe, to the man who would take her there once."

"That would be paying very dear for it," said my little wife, laughing. "Dearest, we could make her happy at less cost, for that hurts very much."

"I was thinking of it, my love. Here is the key of the box; you can make them a present of it."

"Here is the key of a box at the St. Moses Theatre," she said to the hostess. "It costs two sequins; go in our stead and tell your daughter to keep her rosebud for something better."

"To enable you to amuse yourself, my good woman, take these two sequins," I added. "Let your daughter enjoy herself well."

The good hostess, thoroughly amazed at the generosity of her guests, ran in a great hurry to her daughter, while we were delighted at having laid ourselves under the pleasant necessity of again going to bed. She came up with her daughter, a handsome, tempting blonde, who insisted upon kissing the hands of her benefactors.

"She is going this minute with her lover," said the mother. "He is waiting for her, but I will not let her go alone with him, for he is not to be trusted; I am going with them."

"That is right, my good woman; but, when you come back this evening, let the gondola wait for us; it will take us to Venice."

"What! Do you mean to remain here until we return?"

"Yes, for this is our wedding day."

"To-day? God bless you."

The two women having left us, we went to bed, and four hours of ecstatic delights passed off with wonderful rapidity. Worn out with happiness and enjoyment, we were going to sleep when the hostess came to tell us that the gondola was waiting for us. I immediately got up to open the door, in the hope that she would amuse us with her description of the opera; but she left that task to her daughter, who had come up with her, and she went down again to prepare some coffee for us. The young girl assisted my sweetheart to dress, but now and then she would wink at me in a manner which made me think that she had more experience than her mother imagined.

Nothing could have been more indiscreet than the eyes of my beloved mistress; they wore the irrefutable marks of her first exploits. It is true that she had just been fighting a battle which had positively made her a different being to what she was before the engagement.

We took some hot coffee, and I told our hostess to get us a nice dinner for the next day; we then left in the gondola. The dawn of day was breaking when we landed at St. Sophia's Square, in order to set the curiosity of the gondoliers at fault, and we parted happy, delighted and certain that we were thoroughly married. I went to bed, having made up my mind to compel M. de Bragadin, through the power of the oracle, to obtain legally for me the hand of my beloved C— C—. I remained in bed until noon and spent the rest of the day in gam-

bling, with ill luck, as if Dame Fortune had wished to warn me that she did not approve of my love.

CHAPTER 36

THE happiness derived from my love had prevented me from attaching any importance to my losses, and, being entirely engrossed with the thought of my sweetheart, my mind did not seem to care for whatever did not relate to her.

I was thinking of her the next morning when her brother called on me with a beaming countenance and said, "I am certain that you have slept with my sister, and I am very glad of it. She does not confess as much, but her confession is not necessary. I will bring her to you to-day."

"You will oblige me, for I adore her, and I will get a friend of mine to ask her in marriage from your father in such a manner that he will not be able to refuse."

"I wish it may be so, but I doubt it. In the meantime, I find myself compelled to beg another service from your kindness. I can obtain, against a note of hand payable in six months, a ring of the value of two hundred sequins, and I am certain to sell it again this very day for the same amount. That sum is very necessary to me just now, but the jeweller, who knows you, will not let me have it without your security. Will you oblige me in this instance? I know that you lost a great deal last night; if you want some money, I will give you one hundred sequins, which you will return when the note of hand falls due."

How could I refuse him? I knew very well that I would be duped, but I loved his sister so much!

"I am ready," said I to him, "to sign the note of hand, but you are wrong in abusing my love for your sister in such a manner."

We went out, and, the jeweller having accepted my security, the bargain was completed. The merchant, who knew me only by name, thinking of paying me a great compliment, told P— C— that, with my guarantee, all his goods were at his service. I did not feel flattered by the compliment, but thought I could see in it the knavery of P— C—, who was clever enough to discover, out of a hundred, the fool who without any reason placed confidence in me when I possessed nothing. It was thus that my angelic C— C—, who seemed made to insure my happiness, was the innocent cause of my ruin.

At noon P— C— brought his sister, and, wishing most likely to prove his honesty—for a cheat always tries to do that—he gave me back the letter of exchange which I had endorsed for the Cyprus wine, assuring me likewise that at our next meeting he would hand me the hundred sequins which he had promised me.

I took my mistress as usual to Zuecca; I arranged for the garden to be kept closed, and we dined under a vine arbour. My dear C— C— seemed to me more beautiful since she was mine, and, friendship being

united to love, we felt a delightful sensation of happiness, which shone on our features. The hostess, who had found me generous, gave us some excellent game and some very fine fish; her daughter served us. She also came to undress my little wife as soon as we had gone upstairs to give ourselves up to the sweet pleasures natural to a young married couple.

When we were alone, my beloved asked me what was the meaning of the hundred sequins which her brother had promised to bring me, and I told her all that had taken place between him and me.

"I entreat you, darling," she said to me, "to refuse all my brother's demands in future; he is, unfortunately, in such difficulties that he would in the end drag you down into the abyss into which he must fall."

This time our enjoyment seemed to us more substantial; we relished it with a more refined delight, and, so to speak, we reasoned over it.

"Oh, my best beloved!" she said to me, "do all in your power to render me pregnant; for in that case my father could no longer refuse his consent to my marriage, under the pretext of my being too young."

It was with great difficulty that I made her understand that the fulfilment of that wish, however much I shared it myself, was not entirely in our power; but that, under the circumstances, it would most probably be fulfilled sooner or later.

After working at the completion of that great undertaking, we gave several hours to a profound and delightful repose. As soon as we were awake, I called for candles and coffee, and we sought again the mutual harmony of ecstatic enjoyment which was necessary to insure our future happiness. It was in the midst of our loving sport that the too early dawn surprised us, and we hurried back to Venice in order to avoid inquisitive eyes.

We renewed our pleasures on the Friday, but, whatever delight I may feel now in the remembrance of those happy moments, I will spare my readers the description of my new enjoyment, because they might not feel interested in such repetitions. I must therefore only say that, before parting on that day, we fixed for the following Monday, the last day of the carnival, our last meeting in the Garden of Zuecca. Death alone could have hindered me from keeping that appointment, for it was to be the last opportunity of enjoying our amorous sport.

On the Monday morning I saw P— C—, who confirmed the appointment for the same hour and at the place previously agreed upon, and I was there in good time. In spite of the impatience of a lover, the first hour of expectation passes rapidly, but the second is mortally long. Yet the third and the fourth passed without my seeing my beloved mistress. I was in a state of fearful anxiety; I imagined the most terrible disasters. It seemed to me that, if C— C— had been unable to go out, her brother ought to have come to let me know it.

But some unexpected mishap might have detained him, and I could not go and fetch her myself at her house, even if I had feared nothing

else than to miss them on the way. At last, as the church bells were tolling the Angelus, C— C— came, alone and masked.

"I was certain," she said, "that you were here, and here I am in spite of all my mother could say. You must be starving. My brother has not put in an appearance through the whole of this day. Let us go quickly to the garden, for I am very hungry too, and love will console us for all we have suffered to-day."

She had spoken very rapidly and without giving me time to utter a single word; I had nothing more to ask her. We went off and took a gondola to our garden. The wind was very high, it blew almost a hurricane, and, the gondola having only one rower, the danger was great. C— C—, who had no idea of it, was playing with me to make up for the restraint under which she had been all day; but her movements exposed the gondolier to danger; if he had fallen into the water, nothing could have saved us, and we would have found death on our way to pleasure. I told her to keep quiet, but, being anxious not to frighten her, I dared not acquaint her with the danger we were running. The gondolier, however, had not the same reasons for sparing her feelings, and he called out to us in a stentorian voice that, if we did not keep quiet, we were all lost. His threat had the desired effect, and we reached the landing without mishap. I paid the man generously, and he laughed for joy when he saw the money for which he was indebted to the bad weather.

We spent six delightful hours in our casino; this time sleep was not allowed to visit us. The only thought which threw a cloud over our felicity was that, the carnival being over, we did not know how to contrive our future meetings. We agreed, however, that on the following Wednesday morning I should pay a visit to her brother and that she would come to his room as usual.

We took leave of our worthy hostess, who, entertaining no hope of seeing us again, expressed her sorrow and overwhelmed us with blessings. I escorted my darling without any accident as far as the door of her house and went home.

I had just risen at noon when, to my great surprise, I had a visit from De la Haye with his pupil Calvi, a handsome young man but the very copy of his master in everything. He walked, spoke, laughed exactly like him; it was the same language as that of the Jesuit, a correct but rather harsh French. I thought that excess of imitation perfectly scandalous and could not help telling De la Haye that he ought to change his pupil's deportment because such servile mimicry would only expose him to bitter raillery. As I was giving him my opinion on that subject, Bavois made his appearance, and, when he had spent an hour in the company of the young man, he was entirely of the same mind. Calvi died two or three years later. De la Haye, who was bent upon forming pupils, became two or three months after Calvi's death the tutor of the young Chevalier de Morosini, the nephew of the nobleman to whom Bavois was indebted for his rapid fortune,

who was then the Commissioner of the Republic to settle its boundaries with the Austrian Government represented by Count Christiani.

I was in love beyond all measure and would not postpone any longer an application on which my happiness depended. After dinner and as soon as everybody had retired, I begged M. de Bragadin and his two friends to grant me an audience of two hours in the room in which we were always inaccessible. There, without any preamble, I told them that I was in love with C— C— and determined on carrying her off if they could not contrive to obtain her from her father for my wife. "The question at issue," I said to M. de Bragadin, "is how to give me a respectable position and guarantee a dowry of ten thousand ducats which the young lady would bring me." They answered that, if *Paralis* gave them the necessary instructions, they were ready to fulfill them. That was all I wanted. I spent two hours in forming all the pyramids they wished, and the result was that M. de Bragadin himself should demand in my name the hand of the young lady, the oracle explaining the reason of that choice by stating that it must be the same person who would guarantee the dowry with his own fortune. The father of my mistress being then at his country house, I told my friends that they would have due notice of his return and that they were to go all three together when M. de Bragadin demanded the young lady's hand.

Well pleased with what I had done, I called on P— C— the next morning. An old woman who opened the door for me told me he was not at home, but his mother would see me. She came immediately with her daughter, and they both looked very sad, which at once struck me as a bad sign. C— C— told me that her brother was in prison for debt and that it would be difficult to get him out of it because his debts amounted to a very large sum. The mother, crying bitterly, told me how deeply grieved she was at not being able to support him in prison, and she showed me the letter he had written her, in which he requested her to deliver an enclosure to his sister. I asked C— C— whether I could read the letter; she handed it to me, and I saw that he begged her to speak to me in his behalf. As I returned it to her, I told her to write to him that I was not in a position to do anything for him, but I entreated the mother to accept twenty-five sequins, which would enable her to assist him by sending him one or two at a time. She made up her mind to take them only when her daughter joined her entreaties to mine.

After this painful scene I gave them an account of what I had done in order to obtain the hand of my young sweetheart. Madame C— thanked me, expressed her appreciation of my honourable conduct, but told me not to entertain any hope because her husband, who was very stubborn in his ideas, had decided that his daughter should marry a merchant and not before the age of eighteen. He was expected home that very day. As I was taking leave of them, my mistress contrived to slip into my hand a letter in which she told me that I could safely make use of the key which I had in my possession, to enter the house

at midnight, and that I would find her in her brother's room. This news made me very happy, for, notwithstanding all the doubts of her mother, I hoped for success in obtaining her hand.

When I returned home, I told M. de Bragadin of the expected arrival of the father of my charming C— C—, and the kind old man wrote to him immediately in my presence. He requested him to name at what time he might call on him on important business. I asked M. de Bragadin not to send his letter until the following day.

The reader can very well guess that C— C— had not to wait for me long after midnight. I gained admittance without any difficulty and found my darling, who received me with open arms.

"You have nothing to fear," she said to me. "My father has arrived in excellent health, and everyone in the house is fast asleep."

"Except Love," I answered, "which is now inviting us to enjoy ourselves. Love will protect us, dearest, and to-morrow your father will receive a letter from my worthy protector."

At those words C— C— shuddered. It was a presentiment of the future.

She said to me:

"My father thinks of me now as if I were nothing but a child; but his eyes are going to be opened respecting me; he will examine my conduct, and God knows what will happen! Now we are happy, even more than we were during our visits to Zuecca, for we can see each other every night without restraint. But what will my father do when he hears that I have a lover?"

"What can he do? If he refuses me your hand, I will carry you off, and the patriarch would certainly marry us. We shall be one another's for life."

"It is my most ardent wish, and to realise it I am ready to do anything; but, dearest, I know my father."

We remained two hours together, thinking less of our pleasures than of our sorrow; I went away promising to see her again the next night. The whole of the morning passed off very heavily for me, and at noon M. de Bragadin informed me that he had sent his letter to the father, who had answered that he would call himself on the following day to ascertain M. de Bragadin's wishes. At midnight I saw my beloved mistress again and gave her an account of all that had happened. C— C— told me that the senator's message had greatly puzzled her father because, as he had never had any intercourse with that nobleman, he could not imagine what he wanted with him. Uncertainty, a sort of anxious dread and a confused hope rendered our enjoyment much less lively during the two hours which we spent together. I had no doubt that M. Ch. C—, the father of my young friend, would go home immediately after his interview with M. de Bragadin and ask his daughter a great many questions, and I feared lest C— C—, in her trouble and confusion, should betray herself. She felt herself that it might be so, and I could see how painfully anxious she was. I was extremely uneasy myself and suffered much because, not knowing how

her father would look at the matter, I could not give her any advice. As a matter of course, it was necessary for her to conceal certain circumstances which would have prejudiced his mind against us; yet it was urgent to tell him the truth and to show herself entirely submissive to his will. I found myself placed in a strange position and, above all, regretted having made the all-important application precisely because it was certain to have too decisive a result. I longed to get out of the state of indecision in which I was, and I was surprised to see my young mistress less anxious than I. We parted with heavy hearts but with the hope that the next night would again bring us together, for the contrary did not seem to us possible.

The next day, after dinner, M. Ch. C— called upon M. de Bragadin, but I did not show myself. He remained a couple of hours with my three friends, and, as soon as he had gone, I heard that his answer had been what the mother had told me, but with the addition of a circumstance most painful to me—namely, that his daughter would pass in a convent the four years which were to elapse, before she could think of marriage. As a palliative to his refusal, he had added, that, if by that time I had a well established position in the world, he might consent to our wedding.

That answer struck me as most cruel, and, in the despair into which it threw me, I was not astonished when the same night I found the door by which I used to gain admittance to C— C— closed and locked inside.

I returned home more dead than alive and lost twenty-four hours in that fearful perplexity into which a man is often thrown when he feels himself bound to make a decision without knowing what to decide. I thought of carrying her off, but a thousand difficulties combined to prevent the execution of that scheme, and her brother was in prison. I saw how difficult it would be to contrive a correspondence with my wife—for I considered C— C— as such, much more than if our marriage had received the sanction of the priest's blessing or the notary's legal contract.

Tortured by a thousand distressing ideas, I made up my mind at last to pay a visit to Madame C—. A servant opened the door and informed me that madame had gone to the country; she could not tell me when she was expected to return to Venice. This news was a terrible thunderbolt to me; I remained as motionless as a statue; for, now that I had lost that last resource, I had no means of procuring the slightest information. I tried to look calm in the presence of my three friends, but in reality I was in a state truly worthy of pity, and the reader will perhaps realise it if I tell him that in my despair I made up my mind to call on P— C— in his prison, in the hope that he might give me some information.

My visit proved useless; he knew nothing, and I did not enlighten his ignorance. He told me a great many lies, which I pretended to accept as gospel, and, giving him two sequins, I went away, wishing him a prompt release.

I was racking my brain to contrive some way to learn the situation of my mistress—for I felt certain it was a fearful one—and, believing her to be unhappy, I reproached myself most bitterly as the cause of her misery. I had reached such a state of anxiety that I could neither eat nor sleep.

Two days after the father's refusal, M. de Bragadin and his two friends went to Padua for a month. I had not had the heart to go with them, and I was alone in the house. I needed consolation and I went to the gaming-table, but I played without attention and lost a great deal. I had already sold whatever I possessed of any value, and I owed money everywhere. I could expect no assistance except from my three kind friends, but shame prevented me from confessing my position to them. I was in that disposition which leads easily to self-destruction, and I was thinking of it as I was shaving myself before a toilet-glass when the servant brought to my room a woman who had a letter for me. The woman came up to me and, handing me the letter, said, "Are you the person to whom it is addressed?"

I recognised at once a seal which I had given to C— C—; I thought I would drop down dead. In order to recover my composure, I told the woman to wait, and I tried to shave myself, but my hand refused to perform its office. I put the razor down, turned my back on the messenger and, opening the letter, read the following lines:

"Before I can write all I have to say, I must be sure of my messenger. I am boarding in a convent and am very well treated and enjoy excellent health, in spite of the anxiety of my mind. The Superior has been instructed to forbid me all visitors and correspondence. I am, however, already certain of being able to write to you, notwithstanding these very strict orders. I entertain no doubt of your good faith, my beloved husband, and I feel sure that you will never doubt a heart which is wholly yours. Trust to me for the execution of whatever you may wish me to do, for I am yours and only yours. Answer only a few words until we are quite certain of our messenger. Muran, June 12th."

In less than three weeks my young friend had become a clever moralist; it is true that Love had been her teacher, and Love alone can work miracles. As I concluded the reading of her letter, I was in the state of a criminal pardoned at the foot of the scaffold. I required several minutes before I recovered the exercise of my will and my presence of mind.

I turned towards the messenger and asked her if she could read.

"Ah, sir! if I could not read, it would be a great misfortune for me. There are women appointed for the services of the nuns of Muran. One of us comes in turn to Venice once a week; I come every Wednesday, and this day week, I shall be able to bring you an answer to the letter which, if you like, you can write now."

"Then you take charge of the letters entrusted to you by the nuns?"

"That is not supposed to be one of our duties, but, the faithful delivery of letters being the most important of the commissions committed to our care, we should not be trusted if we could not read the addresses of the letters placed in our hands. The nuns want to be sure that we shall not give to Peter the letter addressed to Paul. The good Mothers are always afraid of our being guilty of such blunders. Therefore I shall be here again, without fail, this day week at the same hour, but please to order your servant to wake you in case you should be asleep, for our time is measured as if it were gold. Above all, rely entirely upon my discretion as long as you employ me; for, if I did not know how to keep a silent tongue in my head, I should lose my bread, and then what would become of me—a widow with four children, a boy eight years old and three pretty girls, the eldest of whom is only sixteen? You can see them when you come to Muran. I live near the church, on the garden side, and I am always at home when I am not engaged in the service of the nuns, who are always sending me on one errand or another. The young lady—I do not know her name yet, for she has been only one week with us—gave me this letter, but so cleverly! Oh! she must be as witty as she is pretty, for three nuns who were there were completely bamboozled. She gave it to me with this other letter for myself, which I likewise leave in your hands. Poor child, she tells me to be discreet! She need not be afraid. Write to her, I entreat you, sir, that she can trust me and answer boldly. I would not tell you to act in the same manner with all the other messengers of the convent, although I believe them to be honest—and God forbid I should speak ill of my fellow-creatures! but they are all ignorant, you see; and it is certain that they babble, at least with their confessors if with nobody else. As for me, thank God! I know very well that I need not confess anything but my sins, and surely to carry a letter from a Christian woman to her brother in Christ is not a sin. Besides, my confessor is a good old monk, quite deaf, I believe, for the worthy man never answers me; but that is his business, not mine!"

I had not intended to ask her any questions, but, if such had been my intention, she would not have given me time to carry it into execution; and, without my asking her anything, she was telling me everything I cared to know, and she did so in her anxiety for me to avail myself of her services exclusively.

I immediately sat down to write my dear recluse, intending at first to write only a few lines, as she had requested me; but my time was too short to write so little. My letter was a screed of four pages, and very likely it said less than her note of one short page. I told her her letter had saved my life and asked her whether I could hope to see her. I informed her that I had given a sequin to the messenger, that she would find another for herself under the seal of my letter and that I would send her all the money she might want. I entreated her not to fail to write every Wednesday, to be certain that her letters would never be long enough, to give me full particulars, not only of all she

did, of all she was allowed to do, but also of all her thoughts respecting her release from imprisonment and the overcoming of all the obstacles which were in the way of our mutual happiness, for I was as much hers as she was mine. I hinted to her the necessity of gaining the love of all the nuns and boarders, but without taking them into her confidence, and of showing no dislike of her convent life. After praising her for the clever manner in which she had contrived to write to me, in spite of the Superior's orders, I made her understand how careful she was to be to avoid being surprised while she was writing because in such a case her room would certainly be searched and all her papers seized.

"Burn all my letters, darling," I added, "and recollect that you must go to confession often, but without implicating our love. Share with me all your sorrows, which interest me even more than your joys."

I sealed my letter in such a manner that no one could possibly guess that there was a sequin hidden under the sealing wax, and I rewarded the woman, promising her that I would give her the same reward every time she brought me a letter from my friend. When she saw the sequin which I had put in her hand, the good woman cried for joy and told me that, as the gates of the convent were never closed for her, she would deliver my letters the moment she found the young lady alone.

Here is the note which C— C— had given to the woman with the letter addressed to me:

"God Himself, my good woman, prompts me to have confidence in you, rather than in anybody else. Take this letter to Venice and, should the person to whom it is addressed not be in the city, bring it back to me. You must deliver it to that person himself, and, if you find him, you will most likely get an answer, which you must give me, but only when you are certain that nobody can see you."

If Love is imprudent, it is only in the hope of enjoyment; but, when it is necessary to bring back happiness destroyed by some untoward accident, Love foresees all that the keenest perspicacity could possibly find out. The letter of my charming wife overwhelmed me with joy, and in one moment I passed from a state of despair to one of extreme felicity. I felt certain that I should succeed in carrying her off, even if the walls of the convent could boast of artillery, and after the departure of the messenger my first thought was to endeavour to spend pleasantly the seven days before I could receive the second letter. Gambling alone could do it, but everybody had gone to Padua. I got my trunk ready and immediately sent it to the *burchiello* then ready to start, and left for Fusina. From that place I posted and in less than three hours arrived at the door of the Bragadin Palace, where I found my dear protector on the point of sitting down to dinner. He embraced me affectionately and, seeing me covered with perspiration, said to me, "I am certain you are in no hurry."

"No," I answered, "but I am starving."

I brought joy to the brotherly trio, and I enhanced their happiness when I told my friends that I would remain six days with them. De la Haye dined with us on that day; as soon as dinner was over, he closeted himself with M. Dandolo, and for two hours they remained together. I had gone to bed during that time, but M. Dandolo came up to me and told me that I had arrived just in time to consult the oracle respecting an important affair entirely private to himself. He gave me the questions and requested me to find the answers. He wanted to know whether he would act rightly if he accepted a project proposed to him by De la Haye.

The oracle answered negatively.

M. Dandolo, rather surprised, asked a second question; he wished *Paralis* to give his reasons for the denial.

I formed the cabalistic pile and brought out this answer, "I asked Casanova's opinion, and, as I find it opposed to the proposal made by De la Haye, I do not wish to hear any more about it."

Oh! wonderful power of self-delusion! This worthy man, pleased at being able to throw the odium of a refusal on me, went away perfectly satisfied. I had no idea of the nature of the affair to which he had been alluding and felt no curiosity about it, but it annoyed me that a Jesuit should interfere and try to make my friends do anything otherwise than through my instrumentality, and I wanted that intriguer to know that my influence was greater than his own.

After that I dressed, masked myself and went to the opera, where I sat down to a faro table and lost all my money. Fortune was determined to show me that it does not always agree with Love. My heart was heavy, I felt miserable; I went to bed. When I woke in the morning, I saw De la Haye come into my room with a beaming countenance, and, assuming an air of devoted friendship, he made a great show of his feelings towards me. I knew what to think of it all and waited for the *dénouement*.

"My dear friend," he said to me at last, "why did you dissuade M. Dandolo from doing what I had suggested to him?"

"What had you suggested to him?"

"You know well enough."

"If I knew it, I would not ask you."

"M. Dandolo himself told me you had advised him against it."

"Advised against, that may be, but certainly not dissuaded, for, if he had been persuaded in his own mind, he would not have asked my advice."

"As you please; but may I inquire your reasons?"

"Tell me first what your proposal was."

"Did he not tell you?"

"Perhaps he did; but, if you wish to know my reasons, I must hear the whole affair from your own lips because M. Dandolo spoke to me under a promise of secrecy."

"Of what good is all this reserve?"

"Everyone has his own principles and his own way of thinking; I have a sufficiently good opinion of you to believe that you would act exactly as I do, for I have heard you say that in all secret matters one ought to guard against surprise."

"I am incapable of taking such an advantage of a friend; but, as a general rule, your maxim is a right one; I like prudence. I will tell you the whole affair."

"You are aware that Madame Tripolo has been left a widow and that M. Dandolo is courting her assiduously, after having done the same for fourteen years during the life of the husband. The lady, who is still young, beautiful and lovely and also very respectable, wishes to become his wife. It is to me that she has confided her wishes, and, as I saw nothing that was not praiseworthy, from either a temporal or a spiritual point of view, in that union—for, after all, we are all men—I took the affair in hand with real pleasure. I fancied even that M. Dandolo felt some inclination for that marriage when he told me that he would give me his decision this morning. I am not astonished at his having asked your advice in such an important affair, for a prudent man is right in asking the opinion of a wise friend before taking a decisive step; but I must tell you candidly that I am astonished at your disapproval of such a marriage. Pray excuse me if, in order to improve by the information, I ask why your opinion is exactly the reverse of mine."

Delighted at having discovered the whole affair and at having arrived in time to prevent my friend, who was goodness itself, contracting an absurd marriage, I answered the hypocrite that I loved M. Dandolo, that I knew his temperament and was certain that a marriage with a woman like Madame Tripolo would shorten his life.

"That being my opinion," I added, "you must admit that, as a true friend, I was right in advising him against your proposal. Do you recollect having told me that you never married for the very same reason? Do you recollect your strong arguments in favour of celibacy while we were at Parma? Consider also, I beg, that every man has a certain small stock of selfishness and that I may be allowed to have mine when I think that, if M. Dandolo took a wife, the influence of that wife would of course have some weight and that, the more she gained in influence over him, the more I should lose. So you see it would not be natural for me to advise him to take a step which would ultimately prove very detrimental to my interests. If you can prove that my reasons are either trifling or sophistical, speak openly; I will tell M. Dandolo that my mind has changed; Madame Tripolo will become his wife when we return to Venice. But let me warn you that a thorough conviction can alone move me."

"I do not believe myself clever enough to convince you. I shall write to Madame Tripolo that she must apply to you."

"Do not write anything of the sort to that lady or she will think that you are laughing at her. Do you suppose her foolish enough to

expect that I will give way to her wishes? She knows that I do not like her."

"How can she possibly know that?"

"She must have remarked that I have never cared to accompany M. Dandolo to her house. Learn from me once for all that, as long as I live with my three friends, they shall have no wife but me. You may get married as soon as you please; I promise not to throw any obstacle in your way; but, if you wish to remain on friendly terms with me, give up all idea of leading my three friends astray."

"You are very caustic this morning."

"I lost all my money last night."

"Then I have chosen a bad time. Farewell."

From that day De la Haye became my secret enemy, and to him I was in a great measure indebted, two years later, for my imprisonment under The Leads of Venice—not owing to his slanders, for I do not believe he was capable of that, Jesuit though he was (and even amongst such people there is sometimes some honourable feeling), but through the mystical insinuations which he made in the presence of bigoted persons. I must give fair notice to my readers that, if they are fond of such people, they must not read these *Memoirs*, for they belong to a tribe which I have good reason to attack unmercifully.

The fine marriage was never again alluded to. M. Dandolo continued to visit his beautiful widow every day, and I took care to elicit from *Paralis* a strong interdiction for me never to set foot in her house.

Don Antonio Croce, a young Milanese whom I had known in Reggio, a confirmed gambler and a downright clever hand in securing the favours of Dame Fortune, called on me a few minutes after De la Haye had retired. He told me that, having seen me lose all my money the night before, he had come to offer me the means of retrieving my losses if I would take an equal interest with him in a faro bank that he meant to hold at his house and in which he would have as punters seven or eight rich foreigners who were courting his wife.

"If you will put three hundred sequins in my bank," he said, "you shall be my partner. I have three hundred sequins myself, but this is not enough because the punters play high. Come and dine at my house, and you will make their acquaintance. We can play next Friday, as there will be no opera, and you may rely upon our winning plenty of gold, for a certain Gilenspetz, a Swede, alone can lose twenty thousand sequins."

I was without any resources, or at all events I could expect no assistance except from M. de Bragadin, upon whom I felt ashamed of encroaching. I was well aware that the proposal made by Croce was not strictly moral and that I might have chosen a more honourable society; but, if I had refused, the purse of Madame Croce's admirers would not have been more mercifully treated; another would have profited by that stroke of good fortune. I was therefore not rigid

enough to refuse my assistance as adjutant and my share of the pie; I accepted Croce's invitation.

CHAPTER 37

NECESSITY, that imperious law and my only excuse, having made me almost the partner of a cheat, there was still the difficulty of finding the three hundred sequins required, but I postponed the task of finding them until after I should have made the acquaintance of the dupes and also of the goddess to whom they addressed their worship. Croce took me to the Prato della Valle, where we found madame surrounded with foreigners. She was pretty; and, as a secretary of the imperial ambassador, Count Rosenberg, had attached himself to her, not one of the Venetian nobles dared court her. Those who interested me among the satellites gravitating around that star were the Swede Gilenspetz, a Hamburger, the Englishman Mendez, who has already been mentioned, and three or four others to whom Croce called my attention.

We dined all together, and after dinner there was a general call for a faro bank; but Croce did not accept. His refusal surprised me because with three hundred sequins, being a very skilful player, he had enough to try his fortune. He did not, however, allow my suspicions to last long, for he took me to his own room and showed me fifty pieces of eight, which were equal to three hundred sequins. When I saw that the professional gambler had not chosen me as his partner with the intention of making a dupe of me, I told him that I would certainly procure the amount, and upon that promise he invited everybody to supper for the following day. We agreed that we would divide the spoils before parting in the evening and that no one should be allowed to play on trust.

I had to procure the amount, but to whom could I apply? I could ask no one but M. de Bragadin. The excellent man had not that sum in his possession, for his purse was generally empty; but he found a usurer, a species of animal only too numerous—unfortunately for young men—who, upon a note of hand endorsed by him, gave me a thousand ducats at five per cent for one month, the said interest being deducted by anticipation from the capital. It was exactly the amount I required. I went to the supper; Croce held the bank until daylight, and we divided sixteen hundred sequins between us. The game continued the next evening, and Gilenspetz alone lost two thousand sequins; the Jew Mendez lost about one thousand. Sunday was sanctified by rest, but on the Monday the bank won four thousand sequins. On the Tuesday we all dined together, and the play was resumed; but we had scarcely begun when an officer of the *podestà* made his appearance and informed Croce that he wanted a little private conversation with him. They left the room together, and after a short absence Croce came back rather crestfallen; he announced that by superior orders he was forbidden to hold a bank at his house. Madame fainted

away, the punters hurried out, and I followed their example as soon as I had secured one-half of the gold which was on the table; I was glad enough it was not worse. As I left, Croce told me we would meet again in Venice, for he had been ordered to quit Padua within twenty-four hours. I had expected it would be so, because he was too well known; but his greatest crime, in the opinion of the *podestà*, was that he attracted the players to his own house, whilst the authorities wanted all the lovers of play to lose their money at the opera, where the bankers were mostly noblemen from Venice.

I left the city on horseback in the evening and in very bad weather, but nothing could have kept me back because early the next morning I expected a letter from my dear prisoner. I had travelled only six miles from Padua when my horse fell and I found my left leg caught under it. My boots were soft ones, and I feared I had hurt myself. The postillion was ahead of me, but, hearing the noise made by the fall, he came up and disengaged me; I was not hurt, but my horse was lame. I immediately took the postillion's horse, to which I was entitled, but the insolent fellow, getting hold of the bit, refused to let me proceed. I tried to make him understand that he was wrong; but, far from giving way to my arguments, he persisted in stopping me, and, being in a great hurry to continue my journey, I fired one of my pistols in his face but without hitting him. Frightened out of his wits, the man let go, and I galloped off. When I reached the Dolo, I went straight to the stables and myself saddled a horse which a postillion, to whom I gave a crown, pointed out to me as being excellent. No one thought of being astonished at my other postillion having remained behind, and we started at full speed. It was then one o'clock in the morning; the storm had broken up the road, and the night was so dark that I could not see anything within a yard ahead of me; the day was breaking when we arrived in Fusina.

The boatman threatened me with a fresh storm; but, setting everything at defiance, I took a four-oared boat and reached my dwelling quite safe but shivering with cold and wet to the skin. I had been in my room scarcely a quarter of an hour when the messenger from Muran presented herself and gave me a letter, telling me she would call for the answer in two hours. That letter was a journal of seven pages, the faithful translation of which might weary my readers, but here is the substance of it:

After his interview with M. de Bragadin, the father of C— C— went home, called his wife and daughter to his room and enquired kindly from the latter where she had made my acquaintance. She answered that she had seen me five or six times in her brother's room and I had asked her whether she would consent to be my wife and that she had told me that she was dependent upon her father and mother. The father had then said that she was too young to think of marriage, and, besides, I had not yet conquered a position in society. After that decision he repaired to his son's room and locked the small door inside, as well as the one communicating with the apartment of the mother,

who was instructed by him to let me believe that she had gone to the country, in case I should call on her.

Two days afterwards he came to C— C—, who was beside her sick mother, and told her that her aunt would take her to a convent, where she was to remain until a husband had been provided for her by her parents. She answered that, being perfectly disposed to submit to his will, she would gladly obey him. Pleased with her ready obedience, he promised to go and see her and to let her mother visit her likewise as soon as her health was better. Immediately after that conversation the aunt had called for her, and a gondola had taken them to the convent, where she had been ever since. Her bed and her clothes had been brought to her; she was well pleased with her room and with the nun to whom she had been entrusted and under whose supervision she was. It was by her that she had been forbidden to receive either letters or visits or to write to anybody, under penalty of excommunication by the Holy Father, everlasting damnation and other similar trifles; yet the same nun had supplied her with paper, ink and books, and it was at night that my young friend transgressed the laws of the convent in order to write all these particulars to me. She expressed her conviction respecting the discretion and faithfulness of the messenger and thought she would remain devoted because, being poor, our sequins were a little fortune to her.

She related to me in the most amusing manner that the handsomest of all the nuns in the convent loved her to distraction, gave her a French lesson twice a day and had amicably forbidden her to become acquainted with the other boarders. That nun was only twenty-two years of age; she was beautiful, rich and generous; all the other nuns showed her great respect. "When we are alone," wrote my friend, "she kisses me so tenderly that you would be jealous if she were not a woman." As to our project of running away, she did not think it would be very difficult to carry into execution, but that it would be better to wait until she knew the locality better. She told me to remain faithful and constant and asked me to send her my portrait hidden in a ring by a secret spring known only to us. She added that I might send it to her by her mother, who had recovered her usual health and was in the habit of attending early mass at her parish church every day by herself. She assured me that the excellent woman would be delighted to see me and to do anything I might ask her. "At all events," she concluded, "I hope to find myself in a few months in a position which will scandalise the convent if they are obstinately bent upon keeping me here."

I was just finishing my answer when Laura, the messenger, returned for it. After I had paid the sequin I had promised her, I gave her a parcel containing sealing wax, paper, pens and a tinder-box, which she promised to deliver to C— C—. My darling had told her that I was her cousin, and Laura feigned to believe it.

Not knowing what to do in Venice and believing that I ought for the sake of my honour to show myself in Padua or else people might

suppose that I had received the same order as Croce, I hurried my breakfast and procured a *bolletta* from the booking office for Rome, because I foresaw that the firing of my pistol and the lame horse might not have improved the temper of the post-masters; but by showing them what is called in Italy a *bolletta*, I knew they could not refuse to supply me with horses whenever they had any in their stables. As far as the pistol shot was concerned, I had no fear, for I had purposely missed the insolent postillion; and, even if I had killed him on the spot, it would not have been of much importance.

In Fusina I took a two-wheeled chaise, for I was so tired that I could not have performed the journey on horseback, and I reached the Dolo, where I was recognised and horses were refused me.

I made a good deal of noise, and the post-master, coming out, threatened to have me arrested if I did not pay him for his dead horse. I answered that, if the horse were dead, I would account for it to the post-master in Padua, but what I wanted was fresh horses without delay.

And I showed him the dreaded *bolletta*, the sight of which made him lower his tone; but he told me that, even if he supplied me with horses, I had treated the postillion so badly that not one of his men would drive me. "If that is the case," I answered, "you shall accompany me yourself." The fellow laughed in my face, turned his back upon me and went away. I took two witnesses and called with them at the office of a public notary, who drew up a properly worded document by which I gave notice to the post-master that I should expect an indemnity of ten sequins for each hour of delay until I had horses supplied to me.

As soon as he had been made acquainted with the contents of this, he gave orders to bring out two restive horses. I saw at once that his intention was to have me upset along the road and perhaps thrown into the river; but I calmly told the postillion that, at the very moment my chaise was upset, I would blow his brains out with a pistol shot; this threat frightened the man; he took his horses back to the stables and declared to his master that he would not drive me. At that very moment a courier arrived, who called for six carriage horses and two saddled ones. I warned the post-master that no one should leave the place before me and that, if he opposed my will, there would be a sanguinary contest; in order to prove that I was in earnest, I took out my pistols. The fellow began to swear, but, everyone saying that he was in the wrong, he disappeared.

Five minutes afterwards whom should I see, arriving in a beautiful berlin drawn by six horses, but Croce with his wife, a lady's maid and two lackeys in grand livery? He alighted, we embraced one another, and I told him, assuming an air of sadness, that he could not leave before me. I explained how the case stood; he said I was right, scolded loudly, as if he had been a great lord and made everybody tremble. The post-master had disappeared; his wife came and ordered the postillions to attend to my wants. During that time Croce said to me

that I was quite right in going back to Padua, where the public rumour had spread the report of my having left the city in consequence of an order from the police. He informed me that the *podestà* had likewise expelled M. de Gondoin, a colonel in the service of the Duke of Modena, because he held a faro bank at his house. I promised him to pay him a visit in Venice in the ensuing week.

Croce, who had dropped from the sky to assist me in a moment of great distress, had won ten thousand sequins in four evenings; I had received five thousand for my share and lost no time in paying my debts and redeeming all the articles which I had been compelled to pawn. That scamp brought me back the smiles of Fortune, and from that moment I got rid of the ill luck which had seemed to fasten on me.

I reached Padua in safety, and the postillion, who very likely out of fear had driven me in good style, was well pleased with my liberality; it was the best way of making my peace with the tribe. My arrival caused great joy to my three friends, whom my sudden departure had alarmed, with the exception of M. de Bragadin, in whose hands I had placed my cash-box the day before. His two friends had given credence to the general report stating that the *podestà* had ordered me to leave Padua. They forgot that I was a citizen of Venice and that the *podestà* could not pass such a sentence upon me without exposing himself to legal proceedings. I was tired, but, instead of going to bed, I dressed in my best attire in order to go to the opera without a mask. I told my friends it was necessary for me to show myself so as to give the lie to all that had been reported about me by slanderous tongues. De la Haye said to me, "I shall be delighted if all those reports are false; but you have no one to blame but yourself, for your hurried departure gave sufficient cause for all sorts of surmises."

"And for slander."

"That may be; but people want to know everything, and they invent when they cannot guess the truth."

"And evil-minded fools lose no time in repeating those inventions everywhere."

"But there can be no doubt that you tried to kill the postillion. Is that a calumny likewise?"

"The greatest of all. Do you think that a good shot can miss a man when he is firing in his very face, unless he does it purposely?"

"It seems difficult; but at all events it is certain that the horse is dead and that you must pay for it."

"No, sir, not even if the horse belonged to you, for the postillion preceded me. You know a great many things; do you happen to know the posting regulations? Besides, I was in a great hurry because I had promised a pretty woman to breakfast with her, and such engagements, as you are well aware, cannot be broken."

Master de la Haye looked angry at the rather caustic irony with which I had sprinkled the dialogue, but he was still more vexed when, taking some gold out of my pocket, I returned to him the sum he had lent me in Venice. A man never argues well except when his

purse is well filled; then his spirits are pitched in a high key, unless he should happen to be stupefied by some passion raging in his soul.

M. de Bragadin thought I was quite right to show myself at the opera without a mask.

The moment I made my appearance in the pit, everybody seemed quite astonished, and I was overwhelmed with compliments, sincere or not. After the first ballet I went to the card-room and in four deals won five hundred sequins. Starving and almost dead for want of sleep, I returned to my friends to boast of my victory. My friend Bavois was there, and he seized the opportunity to borrow from me fifty sequins, which he never returned; true, I never asked him for them.

My thoughts being constantly absorbed in my dear C— C—, I spent the whole of the next day in having my likeness painted in miniature by a skilful Piedmontese, who had come for the Fair of Padua and who in after times made a great deal of money in Venice. When he completed my portrait, he painted for me a beautiful St. Catherine of the same size, and a clever Venetian jeweller made the ring, the bezel of which showed only the sainted virgin; but a blue spot, hardly visible on the white enamel which surrounded it, corresponded with the secret spring which brought out my portrait, and the change was obtained by pressing on the blue spot with the point of a pin.

On the following Friday, as we were rising from the dinner-table, a letter was handed to me. It was with great surprise that I recognised the writing of P— C—. He asked me to pay him a visit at the Star Hotel, where he would give me some interesting information. Thinking he might have something to say concerning his sister, I went to him at once.

I found him with Madame C—, and, after congratulating him upon his release from prison, I asked him for the news he had to communicate.

"I am certain," he said, "that my sister is in a convent, and I shall be able to tell you the name of it when I return to Venice."

"You will oblige me," I answered, pretending not to know anything.

But his news had been only a pretext to make me come to him, and his eagerness to communicate it had a very different object in view than the gratification of my curiosity.

"I have sold," he said to me, "my privileged contract for three years for a sum of fifteen thousand florins, and the man with whom I have made the bargain took me out of prison by giving security for me and advanced me six thousand florins in four letters of exchange."

He showed me the letters of exchange, endorsed by a name which I did not know but which he said was a very good one, and he continued:

"I intend to buy six thousand florins' worth of silk goods from the looms of Vicenza and give in payment to the merchants these letters of exchange. I am certain of selling those goods rapidly with a profit

of ten per cent. Come with us to Vicenza; I will give you some of my goods to the amount of two hundred sequins, and thus you will find yourself covered for the guarantee which you were kind enough to give the jeweller for the ring. We shall complete the transaction within twenty-four hours."

I did not feel much inclination for the trip, but I allowed myself to be blinded by the wish to cover the amount which I had guaranteed and which I had no doubt I would be called upon to pay some day or other.

"If I do not go with him," I said to myself, "he will sell the goods at a loss of twenty-five per cent, and I shall get nothing."

I promised to accompany him. He showed me several letters of recommendation for the best houses in Vicenza, and our departure was fixed for early next morning. I was at the Star Hotel by daybreak. A carriage and four was ready; the hotelkeeper came up with his bill, and P— C— begged me to pay it. The bill amounted to five sequins, four of which had been advanced in cash by the landlord to pay the driver who had brought them from Fusina. I saw it was a put-up thing, yet I paid with pretty good grace, for I guessed that the scoundrel had left Venice without a penny. We reached Vicenza in three hours and put up at the Cappello, where P— C— ordered a good dinner before leaving me with the lady to call upon the manufacturers.

When the beauty found herself alone with me, she began by addressing friendly reproaches to me.

"I have loved you," she said, "for eighteen years; the first time I saw you we were in Padua, and we were then only nine years old."

I certainly had no recollection of it. She was the daughter of the antiquarian friend of M. Grimani, who had placed me as a boarder with the accursed Slavonian woman. I could not help smiling, for I recollected that her mother had loved me.

Shopboys soon began to make their appearance, bringing pieces of goods, and the face of Madame C— brightened up. In less than two hours the room was filled with them, and P— C— came back with two merchants, whom he had invited to dinner. Madame allured them by her pretty manners; we dined, and exquisite wines were drunk in profusion. In the afternoon fresh goods were brought in; P— C— made a list of them with the prices; but he wanted more, and the merchants promised to send them the next day, although it was Sunday.

Towards the evening several counts arrived, for in Vicenza every nobleman is a count. P— C— had left his letters of recommendation at their houses. We had a Count Velo, a Count Sesso, a Count Trento—all very amiable companions. They invited us to accompany them to the casino, where Madame C— shone by her charms and her coquettish manners. After we had spent two hours in that place, P— C— invited all his new friends to supper, and it was a scene of gaiety and profusion. The whole affair annoyed me greatly, and therefore I was not amiable; the consequence was that no one spoke to me. I rose from

my seat and went to bed, leaving the joyous company still around the festive board. In the morning I came downstairs, had my breakfast and looked about me. The room was so full of goods that I did not see how P— C— could possibly pay for all with his six thousand florins. He told me, however, that his business would be completed on the morrow and that we were invited to a ball where all the nobility would be present. The merchants with whom he had dealt came to dine with us, and the dinner was remarkable for its extreme profusion.

We went to the ball; but I soon got very weary of it, for everybody was speaking to Madame C— and P— C—, who never uttered a word with any meaning, but, whenever I opened my lips, people would pretend not to hear me. I invited a lady to dance a minuet; she accepted, but looked constantly to the right or to the left and seemed to consider me as a mere dancing machine. A quadrille was formed, but the thing was contrived in such a manner as to leave me out of it, and the very lady who had refused me as a partner danced with another gentleman. Had I been in good spirits, I should certainly have resented such conduct, but I preferred to leave the ball-room. I went to bed, unable to understand why the nobility of Vicenza treated me in such a way. Perhaps they neglected me because I was not named in the letters of introduction given to P— C—, but I thought they might have known the laws of common politeness. I bore the evil patiently, however, as we were to leave the city the next day.

On Monday, the worthy pair being tired, they slept until noon, and after dinner P— C— went out to pay for the goods.

We were to go away early on the Tuesday, and I instinctively longed for that moment. The counts whom P— C— had invited were delighted with his mistress, and they came to supper; but I avoided meeting them.

On the Tuesday morning I was duly informed that breakfast was ready, but, as I did not answer the summons quickly enough, the servant came up again and told me that my wife requested me to make haste. Scarcely had the word "wife" escaped his lips than I visited the cheek of the poor fellow with a tremendous smack and in my rage kicked him downstairs, the bottom of which he reached in four springs at the imminent risk of his neck. Maddened with rage I entered the breakfast-room and, addressing myself to P— C— asked him who was the scoundrel who had announced me in the hotel as the husband of Madame C—. He answered that he did not know; but at the same moment the landlord came into the room with a big knife in his hand and asked me why I had kicked his servant down the stairs. I quickly drew a pistol and, threatening him with it, demanded imperatively from him the name of the person who had represented me as the husband of that woman.

"Captain P— C—," answered the landlord, "gave the names, profession, etc., of your party."

At this moment I seized the impudent villain by the throat and,

pinning him against the wall with a strong hand, would have broken his head with the butt of my pistol if the landlord had not prevented me. Madame had pretended to swoon, for those women can always command tears or fainting fits, and the cowardly P— C— kept on saying, "It is not true; it is not true!"

The landlord ran out to get the hotel register and angrily thrust it under the nose of the coward, daring him to deny his having dictated, "Captain P— C—, with M. and Madame Casanova." The scoundrel answered that his words had certainly not been heard rightly, and the incensed landlord slapped the book in his face with such force that he sent him rolling, almost stunned, against the wall.

When I saw that the wretched poltroon was receiving such degrading treatment without remembering that he had a sword hanging by his side, I left the room and asked the landlord to order me a carriage to take me to Padua.

Beside myself with rage, blushing for very shame, seeing but too late the mistake I had made by accepting the society of a scoundrel, I went up to my room and hurriedly packed up my carpet-bag. I was just going out when Madame C— presented herself before me.

"Begone, madame," I said to her, "or in my rage I might forget the respect due to your sex."

Crying bitterly, she threw herself on a chair and entreated me to forgive her, assuring me that she was innocent and that she was not present when the knave had given the names. The landlady, coming in at that moment, vouched for the truth of her assertion. My anger began to abate, and, as I passed near the window, I saw the carriage I had ordered waiting for me with a pair of good horses. I called for the landlord in order to pay whatever my share of the expense might come to, but he told me that, as I had ordered nothing myself, I had nothing to pay. Just at that juncture Count Velo came in.

"I daresay, count," I said, "that you believe this woman to be my wife."

"That is a fact known to everybody in the city."

"Damnation! And you believed such a thing while knowing that I occupy this room alone and seeing me leave the ballroom and the supper-table yesterday alone, leaving her with you all!"

"Some husbands are blessed with such easy dispositions!"

"I do not think I look like one of that species, and you are not a judge of men of honour; let us go out, and I undertake to prove it to you."

The count rushed down the stairs and out of the hotel. The miserable C— was choking, and I could not help pitying her; for a woman has in her tears a weapon which through my life I have never known how to resist. I considered that, if I left the hotel without paying anything, people might laugh at my anger and suppose that I had a share in the swindle; I requested the landlord to bring me the account, intending to pay half of it. He went for it, but another scene awaited me. Madame C—, bathed in tears, fell on her knees and told

me that, if I abandoned her, she was lost, for she had no money and nothing to leave as security for her hotel bill.

"What, madame! Have you not letters of exchange to the amount of six thousand florins or the goods bought with them?"

"The goods are no longer here; they have all been taken away because the letters of exchange which you saw and which we considered as good as cash only made the merchants laugh; they have sent for everything. Oh! who could have supposed it?"

"The scoundrel! He knew it well enough, and that is why he was so anxious to bring me here. Well, it is right that I should pay the penalty of my own folly."

The bill brought by the landlord amounted to forty sequins, a very high figure for three days; but a large portion of that sum was cash advanced by the landlord. I immediately felt that my honour demanded that I should pay the bill in full; and I paid without any hesitation, taking care to get a receipt given in the presence of two witnesses. I then made a present of two sequins to the landlord's nephew to console him for the thrashing he had received, and I refused the same sum to the wretched C—, who had sent the landlady to beg it for her.

Thus ended that unpleasant adventure, which taught me a lesson and a lesson which I ought to have required. Two or three weeks later I heard that Count Trento had given those two miserable beings some money to enable them to leave the city; as far as I was concerned, I would not have anything to do with them. A month afterwards P— C— was again arrested for debt, the man who had been security for him having become a bankrupt. He had the audacity to write a long letter to me, entreating me to go and see him, but I did not answer him. I was quite as inflexible towards Madame C—, whom I always refused to see. She was reduced to great poverty.

I returned to Padua, where I stopped only long enough to get my ring and to dine with M. de Bragadin, who went back to Venice a few days afterwards.

The messenger from the convent brought me a letter very early in the morning; I devoured its contents; it was very loving but gave no news. In my answer I gave my dear C— C— the particulars of the infamous trick played upon me by her villainous brother and mentioned the ring, with the secret of which I acquainted her.

Following the information I had received from C— C—, I placed myself one morning so as to see her mother enter the church, into which I followed her. Kneeling close to her, I told her I wished to speak with her, and she followed me to the cloister. I began by speaking a few consoling words; then I told her I would remain faithful to her daughter, and I asked her whether she visited her.

"I intend," she said, "to go and kiss my dear child next Sunday, and I shall of course speak of you with her, for I know well enough that she will be delighted to have news of you; but, to my great regret, I am not at liberty to tell you where she is."

"I do not wish you to tell me, my good mother, but allow me to

send her this ring by you. It is the picture of her patroness, and I wish you to entreat her to wear it always on her finger; tell her to look at the image during her daily prayers, for without that protection she can never become my wife. Tell her that, on my side, I address every day a *credo* to St. James."

Delighted with the piety of my feelings and with the prospect of recommending this new devotion to her daughter, the good woman promised to fulfil my commission. I left her, but not before I had placed in her hand ten sequins, which I begged her to force upon her daughter's acceptance to supply herself with the trifles she might require. She accepted, but at the same time she assured me that her father had taken care to provide her with all necessaries.

The letter which I received from C— C— on the following Wednesday was the expression of the most tender affection and the liveliest gratitude. She said that, the moment she was alone, nothing could have been more rapid than the point of the pin which made St. Catherine cut a somersault and presented to her eager eyes the beloved features of the being who was the whole world to her.

"I am constantly kissing you," she added, "even when some of the nuns are looking at me, for, whenever they come near me, I have only to let the top part of the ring fall back, and my dear patroness takes care to conceal everything. All the nuns are highly pleased with my devotion and with the confidence I have in the protection of my blessed patroness, whom they think very much like me in the face."

It was nothing but a beautiful face created by the fancy of the painter, but my dear little wife was so lovely that beauty was sure to be like her.

She said, likewise, that the nun who was teaching her French had offered her fifty sequins for the ring on account of the likeness between her and the portrait of the saint, but not out of veneration for her patroness, whom she turned into ridicule as she read her life. She thanked me for the ten sequins I had sent her because, her mother having given them to her in the presence of several of the sisters, she was thus enabled to spend a little money without raising the suspicions of those curious and inquisitive nuns. She liked to offer trifling presents to the other boarders, and the money allowed her to gratify that innocent taste.

"My mother," added she, "praised your piety very highly; she is delighted with your feelings of devotion. Never mention again, I beg, the name of my unworthy brother."

For five or six weeks her letters were full of the blessed St. Catherine, who caused her to tremble with fear every time she found herself compelled to trust the ring to the mystic curiosity of the elderly nuns, who, in order to see the likeness better through their spectacles, brought it close to their eyes and rubbed the enamel.

"I am in constant fear," C— C— wrote, "of their pressing the invisible blue spot by chance. What would become of me if my

patroness, jumping up, disclosed to their eyes a face, very divine, it is true, but not at all like that of a saint? Tell me, what could I do in such a case?"

One month after the second arrest of P— C—, the jeweller, who had taken my security for the ring, called on me for payment of the bill. I made an arrangement with him, and, on condition of my giving him twenty sequins and leaving him every right over the debtor, he exonerated me. From his prison the impudent P— C— harassed me with his cowardly entreaties for alms and assistance.

Croce was in Venice and engrossed a great share of the general attention. He kept a fine house, an excellent table and a faro bank with which he emptied the pockets of his dupes. Foreseeing what would happen sooner or later, I had abstained from visiting him at his house, but we were friendly whenever we met. His wife having been delivered of a boy, Croce asked me to stand as godfather, a favour which I thought I could grant; but, after the ceremony and the supper which was the consequence of it, I never entered the house of my former partner, and I acted rightly. I wish I had always been as prudent in my conduct.

CHAPTER 38

My former partner was, as I have said before, a skilful and experienced hand at securing the favours of Fortune; he was driving a good trade in Venice, and, as he was amiable and what is called in society "a gentleman," he might have held that excellent footing for a long time if he had been satisfied with gambling; for the State Inquisitors would have too much to attend to if they wished to compel fools to spare their fortunes, dupes to be prudent and cheats not to dupe the fools; but, whether through the folly of youth or through a vicious disposition, the cause of his exile was of an extraordinary and disgusting nature.

A Venetian nobleman, noble by birth but very ignoble in his propensities, called Sgombro and belonging to the Gritti family, fell deeply in love with him, and Croce, either for fun or from taste, showed himself very compliant. Unfortunately the reserve commanded by common decency was not a guest at their amorous feats, and the scandal became so notorious that the Government was compelled to convey to Croce an order to quit the city and seek his fortune in some other place.

Some time afterwards the infamous Sgombro seduced his own two sons, who were both very young, and, unfortunately for him, he put the youngest in such a state as to render necessary an application to a surgeon. The infamous deed became publicly known, and the poor child confessed that he had not had the courage to refuse obedience to his father. Such obedience was, as a matter of course, not considered as forming a part of the duties which a son owes to his

father, and the State Inquisitors sent the disgusting wretch to the citadel of Cataro, where he died after one year of confinement. It is well known that the air of Cataro is deadly and that the Tribunal sentences to inhale it only such criminals as are not judged publicly for fear of exciting too deeply the general horror by the publication of the trial.

It was to Cataro that the Council of Ten sent fifteen years ago the celebrated advocate Cantarini, a Venetian nobleman who by his eloquence had made himself master of the great Council and was on the point of changing the Constitution of the State. He died there at the end of the year. As for his accomplices, the Tribunal thought it was enough to purish the four or five leaders and to pretend not to know the others, who through fear of punishment returned silently to their allegiance.

The Sgombro of whom I spoke before had a charming wife, who is still alive, I believe. Her name was Cornelia Gritti; she was as celebrated by her wit as by her beauty, which she kept in spite of her years. Having recovered her liberty through the death of her husband, she knew better than to make herself a second time the prisoner of the Hymenean god; she loved her independence too much; but, as she loved pleasure too, she accepted the homage of the lovers who pleased her taste.

One Monday, towards the end of July, my servant woke me at daybreak to tell me that Laura wished to speak to me. I foresaw some misfortune and ordered the servant to show her in immediately. These are the contents of the letter which she handed to me:

"My dearest, a misfortune befell me last evening, and it makes me very miserable because I must keep it a secret from everyone in the convent. I am suffering from a very severe loss of blood and do not know what to do, having but very little linen. Laura tells me I shall require a great deal of it if the flow of blood continues. I can take no one into my confidence but you, and I entreat you to send me as much linen as you can. You see that I have been compelled to make a confidante of Laura, who is the only person allowed to enter my room at all times. If I should die, my dear husband, everybody in the convent would, of course, know the cause of my death; but I think of you, and I shudder. What will you do in your grief? Ah, darling love! what a pity!"

I dressed myself hurriedly, plying Laura with questions all the time. She told me plainly that it was a miscarriage and that it was necessary to act with great discretion in order to save the reputation of my young friend, that after all she required nothing but plenty of linen and that it would be nothing—commonplace words of consolation, which did not allay the fearful anxiety under which I was labouring. I went out with Laura, called on a Jew, from whom I bought a quantity of sheets and two hundred napkins, and, putting it all in a large bag repaired with her to Muran. On our way there I wrote in pencil to my sweetheart, telling her to have entire confidence in Laura and assuring her

that I would not leave Muran until all danger had passed. Before we landed, Laura told me that, in order not to be remarked, I had better conceal myself in her house. At any other time it would have been shutting up the wolf in the sheepfold. She left me in a miserable-looking small room on the ground floor, and, concealing about herself as much linen as she could, she hurried to her patient, whom she had not seen since the previous evening. I was in hopes she would find her out of danger, and I longed to see her come back with that good news.

She was absent about one hour, and, when she returned her looks were sad. She told me that my poor friend, having lost a great deal of blood during the night, was in bed in a very weak state and that all we could do was to pray to God for her because, if the flowing of the blood did not stop soon, she could not possibly live twenty-four hours.

When I saw the linen which she had concealed under her clothes to bring it out, I could not disguise my horror, and I thought the sight would kill me. I fancied myself in a slaughter-house! Laura, thinking to console me, told me that I could rely upon the secret being well kept.

"Ah! what do I care!" I exclaimed. "Provided she lives, let the whole world know that she is my wife!"

At any other time the foolishness of poor Laura would have made me laugh, but in such a sad moment I had neither the inclination nor the courage to be merry.

"Our dear patient," added Laura, "smiled as she was reading your letter, and she said that, with you so near her, she was certain not to die."

Those words did me good, but a man needs so little to console him or to soothe his grief!

"When the nuns are at their dinner," said Laura, "I will go back to the convent with as much linen as I can conceal about me, and in the meantime I am going to wash all this."

"Has she had any visitors?"

"Oh, yes! all the convent; but no one has any suspicion of the truth."

"But in such hot weather as this she can have only a very light blanket over her, and her visitors must remark the great bulk of her napkins."

"There is no fear of that, because she is sitting up in her bed."

"What does she eat?"

"Nothing, for she must not eat."

Soon afterwards Laura went out, and I followed her. I called upon a physician, where I wasted my time and my money, in order to get from him a long prescription, which was useless, for it would have put all the convent in possession of the secret, or, to speak more truly, her secret would have been known to the whole world, for a secret known to a nun soon escapes out of the convent's walls. Besides, the

physician of the convent himself would most likely have betrayed it through a spirit of revenge.

I returned sadly to my miserable hole in Laura's house. Half an hour afterwards she came to me, crying bitterly, and placed in my hands this letter, which was scarcely legible:

"I have not strength enough to write to you, my darling; I am getting weaker and weaker; I am bleeding to death, and I am afraid there is no remedy. I abandon myself to the will of God, and I thank Him for having saved me from dishonour. Do not make yourself too unhappy. My only consolation is to know that you are near me. Alas! if I could see you but for one moment, I would die happy."

The sight of a dozen napkins brought by Laura made me shudder, and the good woman imagined that she afforded me some consolation by telling me that as much linen could be soaked with a bottle of blood. My mind was not disposed to taste such consolation; I was in despair and addressed to myself the fiercest reproaches, upbraiding myself as the cause of the death of that adorable creature. I threw myself on the bed and remained there, almost stunned, for more than six hours, until Laura's return from the convent with twenty napkins entirely soaked. Night had come on, and she could not go back to her patient until morning. I passed a fearful night without food, without sleep, looking upon myself with horror and refusing all the kind attentions that Laura's daughters tried to show me.

It was barely daylight when Laura came to announce to me, in the saddest tone, that my poor friend was not bleeding any more. I thought she was dead, and I screamed loudly, "Oh! she is no more!"

"She is still breathing, sir; but I fear she will not outlive this day, for she is worn out. She can hardly open her eyes, and her pulse is scarcely to be felt."

A weight was taken off me; I was instinctively certain that my darling was saved.

"Laura," I said, "this is not bad news; provided the flooding has ceased entirely, all that is necessary is to give her some light food."

"A physician has been sent for. He will prescribe whatever is right, but to tell you the truth I have not much hope."

"Only give me the assurance that she is still alive."

"Yes, she is, I assure you; but you understand very well that she will not tell the truth to the doctor, and God knows what he will order. I whispered to her not to take anything, and she understood me."

"You are the best of women. Yes, if she does not die from weakness before to-morrow, she is saved; nature and love will have been her doctors."

"May God hear you! I shall be back by twelve."

"Why not before?"

"Because her room will be full of people."

Feeling the need of hope and almost dead for want of food, I ordered some dinner and prepared a long letter for my beloved mistress, to be delivered to her when she was well enough to read it. The instants

given to repentance are very sad, and I was truly a fit object for pity. I longed to see Laura again so as to hear what the doctor had said. I had very good cause for laughing at all sorts of oracles, yet through some unaccountable weakness I longed for that of the doctor; I wanted, before all, to find it a propitious one.

Laura's young daughters waited upon me at dinner; I could not manage to swallow a mouthful, but it amused me to see the three sisters devour my dinner at the first invitation I gave them. The eldest sister, a very fine girl, never raised her large eyes once towards me. The two younger ones seemed to me disposed to be amiable, but, if I looked at them, it was only to feed my despair and the cruel pangs of repentance.

At last Laura, whom I was anxiously awaiting, came back; she told me that the dear patient remained in the same state of debility; the doctor had been greatly puzzled by her extreme weakness because he did not know to what cause to attribute it. Laura added:

"He has ordered some restoratives and a small quantity of light broth; if she can sleep, he answers for her life. He has likewise desired her to have someone to watch her at night, and she immediately pointed her finger at me, as if she wished me to undertake that office. Now I promise you never to leave her either night or day, except to bring you news."

I thanked her, assuring her that I would reward her generously. I heard with great pleasure that her mother had paid her a visit and that she had no suspicion of the real state of things, for she had lavished on her the most tender caresses.

Feeling more at ease, I gave six sequins to Laura and one to each of her daughters and ate something for my supper; I then laid myself down on one of the wretched beds in the room. As soon as the two younger sisters saw me in bed, they undressed without ceremony and took possession of the second bed which was close by mine. Their innocent confidence pleased me. The eldest sister, who most likely had more practical experience, retired to the adjoining room; she had a lover to whom she was soon to be married. This time, however, I was not possessed with the evil spirit of concupiscence, and I allowed innocence to sleep peacefully without attempting anything against it.

Early the next morning Laura was the bearer of good news. She came in with a cheerful air to announce that the beloved patient had slept well and that she was going back soon to give her some soup. I felt an almost maddening joy in listening to her, and I thought the oracle of Æsculapius a thousand times more reliable than that of Apollo. But it was not yet time to exult in our victory, for my poor little friend had to recover her strength and make up for all the blood she had lost; that could be done only by time and careful nursing. I remained another week at Laura's house, which I left only after my dear C— C—, in a letter of four pages, had requested me to do so.

Laura, when I left, wept for joy in seeing herself rewarded by the gift of all the fine linen I had bought for my C— C—, and her

daughters were weeping likewise, most probably because, during the ten days I had spent near them, they had not obtained a single kiss from me.

After my return to Venice I resumed my usual habits; but with a nature like mine how could I possibly remain satisfied without positive love? My only pleasure was to receive a letter from my dear recluse every Wednesday, who advised me to wait patiently rather than to attempt carrying her off. Laura assured me that she had become more lovely than ever, and I longed to see her. An opportunity of gratifying my wishes soon offered itself, and I did not allow it to escape. There was to be a taking of the veil, a ceremony which always attracts a large number of persons. On those occasions the nuns always received a great many visitors, and I thought that the boarders were likely to be in the parlour on such an occasion. I ran no risk of being remarked any more than any other person, for I would mingle with the crowd. I therefore went without saying anything about it to Laura and without acquainting my dear little wife of my intentions. I thought I would fall, so great was my emotion, when I saw her within four yards of me and looking at me as if she had been in an ecstatic state. I thought her taller and more womanly, and she certainly seemed to me more beautiful than before. I saw no one but her; she never took her eyes off me, and I was the last to leave that place, which on that day struck me as being the Temple of Happiness.

Three days afterwards I received a letter from her. She painted with such vivid colours the happiness she had felt in seeing me that I made up my mind to give her that pleasure as often as I could. I answered at once that I would attend mass every Sunday at the church of her convent. It cost me nothing; I could not see her, but I knew that she saw me herself, and her happiness made me perfectly happy. I had nothing to fear, for it was almost impossible that anyone could recognise me in the church, which was attended only by the people of Muran.

After hearing two or three masses, I used to take a gondola, the gondolier of which could not feel any curiosity about me. Yet I kept on my guard, for I knew that the father of C— C— wanted her to forget me, and I had no doubt he would take her away, God knew where! if he had had the slightest suspicion of my being acquainted with the place where he had confined her. Thus was I reasoning in my fear to lose all opportunity of corresponding with my dear C— C—, but I did not yet know the disposition and the shrewdness of the sainted daughters of the Lord. I did not suppose that there was anything remarkable in my person, at least for the inmates of a convent; but I was yet a novice respecting the curiosity of women and particularly of unoccupied hearts; I had soon occasion to be convinced.

I had executed my Sunday manœuvring for only a month or five weeks when my dear C— C— wrote to me jestingly that I had become a living enigma for all the convent, boarders and nuns, not even excepting the old ones. They all awaited me anxiously; they warned

each other of my arrival and watched me taking the holy water. They remarked that I never cast a glance towards the grating, behind which were all the inmates of the convent, that I never looked at any of the women coming in or going out of the church. The old nuns said that I was certainly labouring under some deep sorrow, of which I had no hope to be cured except through the protection of the Holy Virgin, and the young ones asserted that I was either melancholy or misanthropic.

My dear wife, who knew better than the others and had no occasion to lose herself in suppositions, was much amused and entertained me by sending me a faithful report of it all. I wrote to her that, if she had any fear of my being recognised, I would cease my Sunday visits to the church. She answered that I could not impose upon her a more cruel privation, and she entreated me to continue my visits. I thought it would be prudent, however, to abstain from calling at Laura's house, for fear of the chattering nuns contriving to know it and discovering in that manner a great deal more than I wished them to find out. But that existence was literally consuming me by slow degrees and could not last long. Besides, I was made to have a mistress and to live happily with her. Not knowing what to do with myself, I would gamble, and I almost invariably won; but, in spite of that, weariness had got hold of me and I was getting thinner every day.

With the five thousand sequins which my partner Groce had won for me in Padua, I had followed M. de Bragadin's advice. I had hired a casino, where I held a faro bank in partnership with a matador, who secured me against the frauds of certain noblemen—tyrants, with whom a private citizen is always sure to be in the wrong in my dear country.

On All Saints' Day in the year 1753, just as, after hearing mass, I was going to step into a gondola to return to Venice, I saw a woman, somewhat in Laura's style, who, passing near me, looked at me and dropped a letter. I picked it up, and the woman, seeing me in possession of the epistle, quietly went on. The letter had no address, and the seal represented a running knot. I stepped hurriedly into the gondola, and, as soon as we were in the offing, I broke the seal. I read the following words:

"A nun, who for the last two months and a half has seen you every Sunday in the church of her convent, wishes to become acquainted with you. A pamphlet which you lost and which chance threw into her hands, makes her believe that you speak French; but, if you like it better, you can answer in Italian because what she wants above all is a clear and precise answer. She does not invite you to call for her at the parlour of the convent because, before you place yourself under the necessity of speaking to her, she wishes you to see her, and for that purpose she will name a lady whom you can accompany to the parlour. That lady shall not know you and need not therefore introduce you in case you should wish to be known.

"Should you not approve of that way to become acquainted, the nun will appoint a certain casino in Muran, in which you will find her alone in the evening any night you may choose. You will then be at liberty either to sup with her or to retire after an interview of a quarter of an hour if you have any other engagements.

"Would you rather offer her a supper in Venice? Name the night, the hour, the place of appointment, and you will see her come out of a gondola. Only be careful to be there alone, masked and with a lantern.

"I feel certain that you will answer me and that you will guess how impatiently I am waiting for your letter. I entreat you, therefore, to give it to-morrow to the same woman through whom you will receive mine; you will find her one hour before noon in the church of St. Cancian, near the first altar on the right.

"Recollect that, if I did not suppose you endowed with a noble soul and a high mind, I could never have resolved on taking a step which might give you an unfavourable opinion of my character."

The tone of that letter, which I have copied word for word, surprised me even more than the offer it contained. I had business to attend to, but I gave up all engagements to lock myself in my room in order to answer it. Such an application betokened an extravagant mind, but there was in it a certain dignity, a singularity which attracted me. I had an idea that the writer might be the same nun who was teaching French to C— C—. She had represented her friend in her letters as handsome, rich, gallant and generous. My dear wife, perhaps, had been guilty of some indiscretion. A thousand fancies whirled through my brain, but I would entertain only those which were favourable to a scheme highly pleasing to me. Besides, my young friend had informed me that the nun who was giving her French lessons was not the only one in the convent who spoke that language. I had no reason to suppose that, if C— C— had made a confidante of her friend, she would have made a mystery of it to me. But, for all that, the nun who had written to me might be the beautiful friend of my dear little wife, and she might also turn out to be a different person; I felt somewhat puzzled. Here is, however, the letter which I thought I could write without implicating myself:

"I answer in French, madame, in the hope that my letter will have the clearness and the precision of which you give me the example in yours.

"The subject is highly interesting and of the highest importance, considering all the circumstances. As I must answer without knowing the person to whom I am writing, you must feel, madame, that, unless I should possess a large dose of vanity, I must fear some mystification and my honour requires that I should keep on my guard.

"If it is true that the person who penned that letter is a respectable woman, who renders me justice in supposing me endowed with feelings as noble as her own, she will find, I trust, that I could not answer in any other way than I am doing now.

"If you have judged me worthy, madame, of the honour which you do me by offering me your acquaintance, although your good opinion can have been formed only from my personal appearance, I feel it my duty to obey you, even if the result be to undeceive you by proving that I had unwittingly led you into a mistaken appreciation of my person.

"Of the three proposals which you have so kindly made in your letter, I dare not accept any but the first, with the restriction suggested by your penetrating mind. I will accompany to the parlour of your convent a lady who shall not know who I am and consequently shall have no occasion to introduce me.

"Do not judge too severely, madame, the specious reasons which compel me not to give you my name, and receive my word of honour that I shall learn yours only to render you homage. If you choose to speak to me, I will answer with the most profound respect. Permit me to hope that you will come to the parlour alone. I may mention that I am a Venetian and perfectly free. The only reason which prevents me from choosing one of the two other arrangements proposed by you, either of which would have suited me better because they greatly honour me, is, allow me to repeat it, a fear of being the victim of a mystification; but these modes of meeting will not be lost when you know me and when I have seen you. I entreat you to have faith in my honour and to measure my patience by your own. To-morrow, at the same place and at the same hour, I shall be anxiously expecting your answer."

I went to the place appointed, and, having met the female Mercury, I gave her my letter with a sequin and told her I would come the next day for the answer. We were both punctual. As soon as she saw me, she handed me back the sequin which I had given her the day before and a letter, requesting me to read it and to let her know whether she was to wait for an answer. Here is the exact copy of the letter:

"I believe, sir, that I have not been mistaken in anything. Like you, I detest untruth when it can lead to important consequences, but I think it a mere trifle when it can do no injury to anyone. Of my three proposals you have chosen the one which does the greatest honour to your intelligence, and, respecting the reasons which induce you to keep your *incognito*, I have written the enclosed to the Countess of S—, which I request you to read. Be kind enough to seal it before delivering it to her. You may call upon her whenever convenient to yourself. She will name her own hour, and you will accompany her here in her gondola. The countess will not ask you any questions, and you need not give her any explanation. There will be no presentation; but, as you will be made acquainted with my name, you can afterwards call on me here, masked, whenever you please and by using the name of the countess. In that way we shall become acquainted without the necessity of disturbing you or of your losing at night some hours which may be precious to you. I have instructed my servant to wait for your answer in case you should be known to the countess and object

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to her. If you approve of the choice I have made of her, tell the messenger that there is no answer."

As I was an entire stranger to the countess, I told the woman that I had no answer to give, and she left me.

Here are the contents of the note addressed by the nun to the countess and which I had to deliver to her:

"I beg of you, my dear friend, to pay me a visit when you are at leisure and to let the masked gentleman—bearer of this note—know the hour, so that he can accompany you. He will be punctual. Farewell. You will much oblige your friend."

That letter seemed to me informed by a sublime spirit of intrigue; there was in it an appearance of dignity which captivated me, although I felt conscious that I was playing the character of a man on whom a favour seemed to be bestowed.

In her last letter my nun, pretending not to be anxious to know who I was, approved of my choice and feigned indifference for nocturnal meetings, but she seemed certain that, after seeing her, I would visit her. I knew very well what to think of it all, for the intrigue was sure to have an amorous issue. Nevertheless, her assurance, or rather confidence, increased my curiosity, and I felt that she had every reason to hope, if she were young and handsome. I might very well have delayed the affair for a few days and have learned from C— C—who that nun could be; but, besides the baseness of such a proceeding, I was afraid of spoiling the game and repenting it afterwards. I was told to call on the countess at my convenience, but it was because the dignity of my nun would not allow her to show herself too impatient, and she certainly thought that I would myself hasten the adventure. She seemed to me too deeply learned in gallantry to admit the possibility of her being an inexperienced novice, and I was afraid of wasting my time, but I had made up my mind to laugh at my own expense if I happened to meet a superannuated female. It is very certain that, if I had not been actuated by curiosity, I should not have gone one step further, but I wanted to see the countenance of a nun who had offered to come to Venice to sup with me. Besides, I was much surprised at the liberty enjoyed by those sainted virgins and at the facility with which they could escape out of their walls.

At three o'clock I presented myself before the countess and delivered the note, and she expressed a wish to see me the next day at the same hour. We dropped a beautiful reverence to one another and parted. She was a superior woman, already going down the hill but still very handsome.

The next morning, being Sunday, I need not say that I took care to attend mass at the convent, elegantly dressed and already unfaithful—at least in idea—to my dear C— C—, for I was thinking of being seen by the nun, young or old, rather than of showing myself to my charming wife.

In the afternoon I masked myself again and at the appointed time repaired to the house of the countess, who was waiting for me. We

went in a two-oared gondola and reached the convent without having spoken of anything but the weather. When we arrived at the gate, the countess asked for M— M—. I was surprised by that name, for the woman to whom it belonged was celebrated. We were shown into a small parlour, and a few minutes afterwards a nun came in, went straight to the grating, touched a spring and made four squares of the grating revolve, which left an opening sufficiently large to enable the two friends to embrace; the ingenious window was afterwards carefully closed. The opening was at least eighteen inches wide, and a man of my size could easily have got through it. The countess sat opposite the nun, and I took my seat a little on one side so as to be able to observe quietly and at my ease one of the most beautiful women it was possible to see. I had no doubt whatever of her being the person mentioned by my dear C— C— as teaching her French. Admiration kept me in a sort of ecstasy, and I never heard one word of their conversation; the beautiful nun, far from speaking to me, did not even condescend to honour me with one look. She was about twenty-two or twenty-three years of age, and the shape of her face was most beautiful. Her figure was much above the ordinary height, her complexion rather pale, her appearance noble, full of energy but at the same time reserved and modest; her eyes, large and full, were of a lovely blue; her countenance was soft and cheerful; her fine lips seemed to breathe the most heavenly voluptuousness, and her teeth were two rows of the most brilliant enamel. Her headdress did not allow me to see her hair, but, if she had any, I knew by the colour of her eyebrows that it was of a beautiful light brown. Her hand and her arm, which I could see as far as the elbow, were magnificent; the chisel of Praxiteles never carved anything more gracefully rounded and plump. In spite of all I could see, of all I guessed, I was not sorry to have refused the two rendezvous which had been offered me by the beauty, for I was sure of possessing her in a few days and it was a pleasure for me to lay my desires at her feet. I longed to find myself alone with her near that grating, and I would have considered it an insult to her if the very next day I had not come to tell her how fully I rendered to her charms the justice they deserved. She was faithful to her determination not to look at me at once, but after all I was pleased with her reserve. All at once the two friends lowered their voices, and out of delicacy I withdrew further. Their private conversation lasted about a quarter of an hour, during which I pretended to be intently looking at a painting; then they kissed one another again by the same process as at the beginning of the interview; the nun closed the opening, turned her back on us and disappeared without casting one glance in my direction.

As we were on our way back to Venice, the countess, tired perhaps of our silence, said to me, with a smile, "M— M— is beautiful and very witty."

"I have seen her beauty, and I believe in her wit."

"She did not address one word to you."

"I had refused to be introduced to her, and she punished me by pretending not to know that I was present."

The countess made no answer, and we reached her house without exchanging another word. At her door a very ceremonious curtsy, with these words, "Adieu, sir!" warned me that I was not to go any further. I had no wish to do so and went away, dreaming and wondering at the singularity of the adventure, the end of which I longed to see.

CHAPTER 39

My beautiful nun had not spoken to me, and I was glad of it, for I was so astonished, so completely under the spell of her beauty that I might have given her a very poor opinion of my intelligence by the rambling answers which I should very likely have given to her questions. I knew her to be certain that she had not to fear the humiliation of a refusal from me, but I admired her courage in running the risk of it in her position. I could hardly understand her boldness, and I could not conceive how she contrived to enjoy so much liberty. A casino at Muran! The possibility of going to Venice to sup with a young man! It was all very surprising, and I decided in my own mind that she had an acknowledged lover whose pleasure it was to make her happy by satisfying her caprices. It is true that such a thought was rather unpleasant to my pride, but there was too much piquancy in the adventure, the heroine of it was too attractive for me to be stopped by any considerations. I saw very well that I was taking the high road to become unfaithful to my dear C— C—, or rather that I was already so in thought and will, but I must confess that, in spite of all my love for that charming child, I felt no qualms of conscience. It seemed to me that an infidelity of that sort, if she ever heard of it, would not displease her, for that short excursion on strange ground would only keep me alive and in good condition for her because it would save me from the weariness which was surely killing me.

I had been presented to the celebrated Countess Coronini by a nun, a relative of M. Dandolo. That countess, who had been very handsome and was very witty, having made up her mind to renounce all the political intrigues which had been the study of her whole life, had sought a retreat in the Convent of St. Justine, in the hope of finding in that refuge the calm which she wanted and which her disgust of society had rendered necessary to her. As she had enjoyed a very great reputation, she was still visited at the convent by all the foreign ambassadors and by the first noblemen of Venice; inside the walls of her convent the countess was acquainted with everything that happened in the city. She always received me very kindly and, treating me as a young man, took pleasure in giving me, every time I called on her, very agreeable lessons in morals. Being quite certain to find out from her, with a little manœuvring, something concerning M—

M—, I decided on paying her a visit the day after I had seen the beautiful nun.

The countess gave me her usual welcome, and, after the thousand nothings which it is the custom to utter in society before anything worth saying is spoken, I led the conversation up to the convents of Venice. We spoke of the wit and influence of a nun called Celsi, who, although ugly, had an immense credit everywhere and in everything. We mentioned afterwards the young and lovely Sister Michali, who had taken the veil to prove to her mother that she was superior to her in intelligence and wit. After speaking of several other nuns who had the reputation of being addicted to gallantry, I named M— M—, remarking that most likely she deserved that reputation likewise, but that she was an enigma. The countess answered with a smile that she was not an enigma for everybody, although she was necessarily so for most people.

"What is incomprehensible," she said, "is the caprice that she took suddenly to become a nun, being handsome, rich, free, well educated, full of wit and, to my knowledge, a freethinker. She took the veil without any reason, physical or moral; it was a mere caprice."

"Do you believe her to be happy, madame?"

"Yes, unless she has repented her decision, or if she does not repent it some day. But, if ever she does, I think she will be wise enough never to say so to anyone."

Satisfied by the mysterious air of the countess that M— M— had a lover, I made up my mind not to trouble myself about it, and, having put on my mask, I went to Muran in the afternoon. When I reached the gate of the convent, I rang the bell and with an anxious heart asked for M— M— in the name of Madame de S—. The small parlour being closed, the attendant pointed out to me the one into which I had to go. I went in, took off my mask and sat down waiting for my divinity.

My heart was beating furiously; I was waiting with great impatience; yet that expectation was not without charm, for I dreaded the beginning of the interview. An hour passed pretty rapidly, but I began then to find the time rather long, and, thinking that perhaps the attendant had not rightly understood me, I rang the bell and inquired whether notice of my visit had been given to Sister M— M—. A voice answered affirmatively. I took my seat again, and a few minutes afterwards an old, toothless nun came in and informed me that Sister M— M— was engaged for the whole day. Without giving me time to utter a single word, the woman left the parlour.

That was one of those terrible moments to which the man who worships at the shrine of the God of Love is exposed! They are indeed cruel moments; they bring fearful sorrow, they may cause death.

Feeling myself disgraced, my first sensation was utter contempt for myself, an inward despair which was akin to rage; the second was disdainful indignation against the nun, upon whom I passed the severest judgment, which I thought she deserved and which was the only way

I had to soothe my grief. Such behaviour proclaimed her to be the most impudent of women and entirely wanting in good sense; for the two letters she had written to me were quite enough to ruin her character if I had wished to revenge myself, and she evidently could not expect anything else from me. She must have been mad to set at defiance my revengeful feelings, and I should certainly have thought that she was insane if I had not heard her converse with the countess.

Time, they say, brings good counsel; it certainly brings calm, and cool reflection gives lucidity to the mind. At last I persuaded myself that what had occurred was after all in no way extraordinary and that I would certainly have considered it at first a very common occurrence if I had not been dazzled by the wonderful beauty of the nun and blinded by my own vanity. As a very natural result, I felt that I was at liberty to laugh at my mishap and that nobody could possibly guess whether my mirth was genuine or only counterfeit. Sophism is so officious!

But, in spite of all my fine arguments, I still cherished the thought of revenge; no debasing element, however, was to form part of it, and, being determined not to leave the person who had been guilty of such a bad practical joke the slightest cause of triumph, I had the courage not to show any vexation. She had sent word to me that she was engaged; nothing more natural; the part I had to play was to appear indifferent. "Most likely she will not be engaged another time," I said to myself, "but I defy her to catch me in the snare again. I mean to show her that I only laugh at her uncivil behaviour." Of course I intended to send back her letters, but not without the accompaniment of a *billet doux* the gallantry of which was not likely to please her.

The worst part of the affair for me was to be compelled to go to her church; because, supposing her not to be aware of my going there for C— C—, she might imagine that the only object of my visits was to give her the opportunity of apologising for her conduct and appointing a new meeting. I wanted her to entertain no doubt of my utter contempt for her person, and I felt certain that she had proposed the other meetings in Venice and at the casino of Muran only to deceive me more easily.

I went to bed with a great thirst for revenge, I fell asleep thinking of it and awoke with the resolution of quenching it. I began to write, but, as I wished particularly that my letter should not show the pique of the disappointed lover, I left it on my table, with the intention of reading it again the next day. This proved a useful precaution, for, when I read it over, twenty-four hours afterwards, I found it unworthy of me and tore it to pieces. It contained some sentences which savoured too much of my weakness, my love and my spite and which, far from humiliating her, would only have given her occasion to laugh at me.

On the Wednesday after I had written to C— C— that very serious reasons compelled me to give up my visits to the church of her convent, I wrote another letter to the nun, but on Thursday it had the

same fate as the first, because upon a second perusal I found the same deficiencies. It seemed to me that I had lost the faculty of writing. Ten days afterwards I found out that I was too deeply in love to have the power of expressing myself in any other way than through the feelings of my heart.

Sincerum est nisi vas, quodcumque infundis acescit.

The face of M— M— had made too deep an impression on me; nothing could possibly obliterate it except the all-powerful influence of time.

In my ridiculous position I was sorely tempted to complain to Countess S—, but I am happy to say I was prudent enough not to cross the threshold of her door. At last I bethought myself that the giddy nun was certainly labouring under constant dread, knowing that I had in my possession her two letters, with which I could ruin her reputation and cause the greatest injury to the convent, and I sent them back to her with the following note, after I had kept them for ten days:

"I can assure you, madame, that it was owing only to forgetfulness that I did not return your two letters, which you will find enclosed. I have never thought of belying my own nature by taking a cowardly revenge upon you, and I forgive you most willingly the two giddy acts of which you have been guilty, whether they were committed thoughtlessly or because you wanted to enjoy a joke at my expense. Nevertheless, you will allow me to advise you not to treat any other man in the same way, for you might meet with one endowed with less delicacy. I know your name, I know who you are; but you need not be anxious, it is exactly as if I did not know it. You may, perhaps, care but little for my discretion, but, if it should be so, I should greatly pity you.

"You may be aware that I shall not show myself again at your church, but let me assure you that it is not a sacrifice on my part, and that I can attend mass anywhere else. Yet I must tell you why I shall abstain from frequenting the church of your convent. It is very natural for me to suppose that to the two thoughtless acts of which you have been guilty you have added another not less serious, namely, that of having boasted of your exploits to the other nuns, and I do not want to be the butt of your jokes in cell or parlour. Do not think me too ridiculous if, in spite of being five or six years older than you, I have not thrown off all feelings of self-respect or trodden under my feet all reserve and propriety—in a word, if I have kept some prejudices, there are a few which in my opinion ought never to be forgotten. Do not disdain, madame, the lesson which I take the liberty to teach you, as I receive in the kindest spirit the one which you have given me, most likely only for the sake of fun but by which I promise you to profit as long as I live."

I thought that, considering all circumstances, my letter was a very genial one; I made up my parcel, put on my mask and looked out for a porter who could have no knowledge of me; I gave him half a

sequin and promised him as much more when he could assure me that he had faithfully delivered my letter at the convent of Muran. I gave him all the necessary instructions and cautioned him to go away the very moment he had delivered the letter at the gate of the convent, even if he were told to wait. I must say here that my messenger was a man from Forli and that the Forlanese were then the most trustworthy men in Venice; for one of them to be guilty of a breach of trust was an unheard-of thing. Such were formerly the Savoyards in Paris, but everything is getting worse in this world.

I was beginning to forget the adventure, probably because I thought, rightly or wrongly, that I had put an insurmountable barrier between the nun and myself, when, ten days after I had sent my letter, as I was coming out of the opera, I met my messenger lantern in hand. I called him and, without taking off my mask, asked him whether he knew me. He looked at me, eyed me from head to foot and finally answered that he did not.

"Did you faithfully carry the message to Muran?"

"Ah, sir! God be praised! I am very happy to see you again, for I have an important communication to make to you. I took your letter, delivered it according to your instructions and went away as soon as it was in the hands of the attendant, although she requested me to wait. When I returned from Muran I did not see you, but that did not matter. On the following day one of my companions, who happened to be at the gate of the convent when I delivered your letter, came early in the morning to tell me to go to Muran because the attendant wanted particularly to speak to me. I went there and, after waiting for a few minutes, was shown into the parlour, where I was kept for more than an hour by a nun as beautiful as the light of day, who asked me a thousand questions for the purpose of ascertaining, if not who you are, at least where I should be likely to find you. You know that I could not give her any satisfactory information. She then left the parlour, ordering me to wait, and at the end of two hours came back with a letter which she entrusted to my hands, telling me that, if I succeeded in finding you out and in bringing her an answer, she would give me two sequins. In the meantime I was to call at the convent every day, show her the letter and receive forty sous every time. Until now I have earned twenty crowns, but I am afraid the lady will get tired of it, and you can make me earn two sequins by answering a line."

"Where is the letter?"

"In my room under lock and key, for I am always afraid of losing it."

"Then how can I answer?"

"If you will wait for me here, you shall have the letter in less than a quarter of an hour."

"I will not wait, because I do not care about the letter. But tell me how you could flatter the nun with the hope of finding me out?"

You are a rogue, for it is not likely that she would have trusted you with the letter if you had not promised her to find me."

"I am not a rogue, for I did faithfully what you told me; but it is true that I gave her a description of your coat, your buckles and your figure, and I can assure you that for the last ten days I have examined all the masks who are about your size, but in vain. Now I recognise your buckles, but I do not think you have the same coat. Alas, sir, it will not cost you much to write only one line. Be kind enough to wait for me in the coffee-house close by."

I could not resist my curiosity any longer and made up my mind not to wait for him but to accompany him as far as his house. I had only to write, "I have received the letter," and my curiosity would be gratified and the Forlanese would earn his two sequins. I could afterwards change my buckles and my mask and thus set all inquiries at defiance.

I therefore followed him to his door; he went in and brought me the letter. I took him to an inn, where I asked for a room with a good fire, and I told my man to wait. I broke the seal of the parcel, a rather large one, and the first papers I saw were the two letters which I had sent back to her in order to allay her anxiety as to the possible consequences of her giddiness.

The sight of these letters caused me such a palpitation of the heart that I was compelled to sit down; it was a most evident sign of my defeat. Besides these two letters I found a third one signed "S." and addressed to M— M—. I read the following lines:

"The mask who accompanied me back to my house would not, I believe, have uttered a single word if I had not told him that the charms of your witty mind were even more bewitching than those of your person; and his answer was, 'I have seen the one, and I believe in the other.' I added that I did not understand why you had not spoken to him, and he said, with a smile, 'I refused to be presented to her, and she punished me for it by not appearing to know that I was present.' These few words were all our dialogue. I intended to send you this note this morning, but found it impossible, Adieu."

After reading this note, which stated the exact truth and which could be considered as proof, my heart began to beat less quickly. Delighted at seeing myself on the point of being convicted of injustice, I took courage and read the following letter:

"Owing to an excusable weakness, feeling curious to know what you would say about me to the countess after you had seen me, I took an opportunity of asking her to let me know all you said to her on the following day at latest, for I foresaw that you would pay me a visit in the afternoon. Her letter, which I enclose and which I beg you to read, did not reach me till half an hour after you had left the convent.

"That was the first fatality.

"Not having received that letter when you called, I had not the

courage to see you. This absurd weakness on my part was the second fatality, but that weakness you will, I hope, forgive. I gave orders to the lay sister to tell you that I was 'ill for the whole day'—a very legitimate excuse, whether true or false, for it was an officious untruth, the corrective of which was to be found in the words 'for the whole day.' You had already left the convent, and I could not possibly send anyone to run after you when the old fool informed me of her having told you that I was 'engaged.'

"That was the third fatality.

"You cannot imagine what I had in mind to do and to say to that foolish sister, but here one must say or do nothing; one must be patient and dissemble, thanking God when mistakes are the result of ignorance and not wickedness—a very common thing in convents. I foresaw at once, at least partly, what would happen and what has actually happened, for no reasonable being could, I believe, have foreseen it all. I guessed that, thinking yourself the victim of a joke, you would be incensed, and I felt miserable, for I did not see any way of letting you know the truth before the following Sunday. My heart longed ardently for that day. Could I possibly imagine that you would take a resolution not to come again to our church? I tried to be patient until that Sunday; but, when I found myself disappointed in my hope, my misery became unbearable, and it will cause my death if you refuse to listen to my justification. Your letter has made me completely unhappy, and I shall not resist my despair if you persist in the cruel resolve expressed by your unfeeling letter. You have considered yourself trifled with, that is all you can say; but will this letter convince you of your error? And, even believing yourself deceived in the most scandalous manner, you must admit that to write such an awful letter you must have supposed me an abominable wretch, a monster, such as a woman of noble birth and refined education cannot possibly be. I enclose the two letters you sent back to me with the idea of allaying my fears which you cruelly supposed very different to what they are in reality. I am a better physiognomist than you, and you must be quite certain that I have not acted thoughtlessly, for I have never thought you capable, I will not say of a crime, but even of an indelicate action. You must have read on my features the signs only of giddy impudence, and that is not my nature. You may be the cause of my death, you will certainly make me miserable for the remainder of my life if you do not justify yourself; on my side I think the justification is complete.

"I hope that, even if you feel no interest in my life, you will think that you are bound in honour to come and speak to me. Come yourself to recall all you have written; it is your duty, and I deserve it. If you do not realise the fatal effect produced upon me by your letter, I must indeed pity you, in spite of my misery, for it proves that you have not the slightest knowledge of the human heart. But I feel certain you will come back, provided the man to whom I trust this letter contrives to find you. Adieu! I await life or death from you."

I did not require to read that letter twice; I was ashamed and in despair. M— M— was right. I called the Forlanese, inquired from him whether he had spoken to her in the morning and whether she looked ill. He answered that he had found her looking more unhappy every day and that her eyes were red from weeping.

"Go down again and wait," I said to him.

I began to write and had not concluded my long screed before the dawn of day; here are, word for word, the contents of the letter which I wrote to the noblest of women, whom in my unreasonable spite I had judged so wrongly:

"I plead guilty, madame; I cannot possibly justify myself, and I am perfectly convinced of your innocence. I should be disconsolate if I did not hope to obtain pardon, and you will not refuse to forgive me if you are kind enough to recollect the cause of my guilt. I saw you, I was dazzled, and I could not realise a happiness which seemed to me a dream; I thought myself the prey of one of those delightful illusions which vanish when we wake up. The doubt under which I was labouring could not be cleared up for twenty-four hours, and how could I express my feverish impatience as I was longing for that happy moment? It came at last! and my heart, throbbing with desire and hope, was flying towards you while I was in the parlour counting the minutes! Yet an hour passed almost rapidly and not unnaturally, considering my impatience and the deep impression I felt at the idea of seeing you. But then, precisely at the very moment when I believed myself certainly about to gaze upon the beloved features which had been in one interview indelibly engraved upon my heart, I saw the most disagreeable face appear, and a creature announced that you were engaged for the whole day, and, without giving me time to utter one word, she disappeared! You may imagine my astonishment and . . . the rest. Lightning would not have produced upon me a more rapid, a more terrible effect! If you had sent me a line by that sister, a line from your hand, I would have gone away, if not pleased, at least submissive and resigned.

"But there was a fourth fatality which you have forgotten to add to your delightful and witty justification. Thinking myself scoffed at, my self-love rebelled, and indignation for the moment silenced love. Shame overwhelmed me! I thought that everybody could read on my face all the horror in my heart, and I saw in you, under the outward appearance of an angel, nothing but a fearful daughter of the Prince of Darkness. My mind was thoroughly upset, and at the end of eleven days I lost the small portion of good sense that was left in me—at least, I must suppose so, as it is then that I wrote you the letter of which you have so good a right to complain and which at that time seemed to me a masterpiece of moderation.

"But I hope it is all over now, and this very day at eleven o'clock you will see me at your feet, tender, submissive and repentant. You will forgive me, divine woman, or I will myself avenge you for the

insult I have hurled at you. The only thing which I dare not ask from you as a great favour is to burn my first letter and never to mention it again. I sent it only after I had written four, which I destroyed one after the other; you may therefore imagine the state of my heart.

"I have given orders to my messenger to go to your convent at once, so that my letter can be delivered to you as soon as you wake in the morning. He would never have discovered me if my good angel had not made me go up to him at the door of the opera house. But I shall not require his services any more; do not answer me, and receive all the devotion of a heart which adores you."

When my letter was finished, I called my Forlanese, gave him one sequin and made him promise me to go to Muran immediately and deliver my letter only to the nun herself. As soon as he had gone, I threw myself on my bed, but anxiety and burning impatience would not allow me to sleep.

I need not tell the reader, who knows the state of excitement under which I was labouring, that I was punctual in presenting myself at the convent. I was shown into the small parlour where I had seen her for the first time, and she almost immediately made her entrance. As soon as I saw her near the grating, I fell on my knees, but she entreated me to rise at once, as I might be seen. Her face was flushed with excitement, and her looks seemed to me heavenly. She sat down, and I took a seat opposite to her. We remained several minutes motionless, gazing at each other without speaking, but I broke the silence by asking her, in a voice full of love and anxiety, whether I could hope to obtain my pardon. She gave me her beautiful hand through the grating, and I covered it with tears and kisses.

"Our acquaintance," she said, "has begun with a violent storm; let us hope that we shall now enjoy it long in perfect and lasting calm. This is the first time we have spoken to one another, but what has occurred must be enough to give us a thorough knowledge of each other. I trust that our intimacy will be as tender as sincere and that we shall know how to have mutual indulgence for our faults."

"Can such an angel as you have any faults?"

"Ah, my friend! who is without them?"

"When shall I have the happiness of convincing you of my devotion with complete freedom and in all the joy of my heart?"

"We will take supper together at my casino whenever you please, provided you give me notice two days beforehand, or I will go and sup with you in Venice if it will not disturb your arrangements."

"It would only increase my happiness. I think it right to tell you that I am in very easy circumstances and that, far from fearing expense, I delight in it; all I possess belongs to the woman I love."

"That confidence, my dear friend, is very agreeable to me, the more so that I have likewise to tell you that I am very rich and could not refuse anything to my lover."

"But you must have a lover?"

"Yes; it is through him that I am rich, and he is entirely my master. I never conceal anything from him. The day after to-morrow, when I am alone with you, I will tell you more."

"But I hope that your lover . . ."

"Will not be there? Certainly not. Have you a mistress?"

"I had one, but, alas! she has been taken from me by violent means, and for the last six months I have led a life of complete celibacy."

"Do you love her still?"

"I cannot think of her without loving her. She has almost as great charms, as great beauty as you; but I foresee that you will make me forget her."

"If your happiness with her was complete, I pity you. She has been violently taken from you, and you shun society in order to feed your sorrow. I have guessed right, have I not? But, if I happen to take possession of her place in your heart, no one, my sweet friend, shall turn me out of it."

"But what will your lover say?"

"He will be delighted to see me happy with such a lover as you. It is in his nature."

"What an admirable nature! Such heroism is quite beyond me!"

"What sort of life do you lead in Venice?"

"I live at the theatres, in society, in the casinos, where I fight against fortune, sometimes with good, sometimes with bad, success."

"Do you visit the foreign ambassadors?"

"No, because I am too much acquainted with the nobility; but I know them all."

"How can you know them if you do not see them?"

"I have known them abroad. In Parma the Duke de Montalegre, the Spanish ambassador; in Vienna I knew Count Rosemberg; in Paris about two years ago, the French ambassador."

"It is near twelve o'clock, my dear friend; it is time for us to part. Come at the same hour the day after to-morrow, and I will give you all the instructions which you will require to enable you to come and sup with me."

"Alone?"

"Of course."

"May I venture to ask you for a pledge? The happiness which you promise me is so immense!"

"What pledge do you want?"

"To see you standing before that small window in the grating with permission for me to occupy the same place as Madame de S—."

She rose at once, and, with the most gracious smile, touched the spring; after a most expressive kiss, I took leave of her. She followed me with her eyes as far as the door, and her loving gaze would have rooted me to the spot if she had not left the room.

I spent the two days of waiting in a whirl of impatient joy which

prevented me from eating and sleeping, for it seemed to me that no other love had ever given me such happiness, or rather that I was going to be happy for the first time.

Irrespective of birth, beauty and the wit which was the principal merit of my new conquest, prejudice was there to enhance a hundred-fold my felicity, for she was a vestal; it was forbidden fruit, and who does not know that, from Eve down to our days, it is that fruit which has always appeared the most delicious! I was on the point of encroaching upon the rights of an all-powerful husband; in my eyes M— M— was above all the queens of the earth.

If my reason had not been the slave of passion, I should have known that my nun could not be a different creature from all the pretty women whom I had loved for the thirteen years that I had been labouring in the fields of love. But where is the man in love who can harbour such a thought? If it presents itself too often to his mind, he expels it disdainfully! M— M— could not by any means be otherwise than superior to all other women in the wide world.

Animal nature, which chemists call the Animal Kingdom, obtains through instinct the three various means necessary for the perpetuation of its species.

There are three real wants which nature has implanted in all human creatures. They must feed themselves, and, to prevent that task from being insipid and tedious, they have the agreeable sensation of appetite, which they feel pleasure in satisfying. They must propagate their respective species—an absolute necessity which proves the wisdom of the Creator, since without reproduction all would be annihilated by the constant law of degradation, decay and death. And, whatever St. Augustine may say, human creatures would not perform the work of generation if they did not find pleasure in it and if there were not in that great work an irresistible attraction for them. In the third place, all creatures have a determined and invincible propensity to destroy their enemies; and it is certainly a very wise ordination, for that feeling of self-preservation makes it a duty for them to do their best for the destruction of whatever can injure them.

Each species obeys these laws in its own way. The three sensations—hunger, desire and hatred—are in animals the satisfaction of habitual instinct and cannot be called pleasures, for they can be so only in proportion to the intelligence of the individual. Man alone is gifted with the perfect organs which render real pleasure peculiar to him because, being endowed with the sublime faculty of reason, he foresees enjoyment, looks for it, composes, improves and increases it by thought and recollection. I entreat you, dear reader, not to get weary of following me in my ramblings, for, now that I am but the shadow of the once brilliant Casanova, I love to chatter; and, if you were to give me the slip, you would be neither polite nor obliging.

Man comes down to the level of beasts whenever he gives himself up to the three natural propensities without calling reason and judgment to his assistance; but, when the mind gives perfect equilibrium

to those propensities, the sensations derived from them become true enjoyment, an unaccountable feeling which gives us what is called happiness and which we experience without being able to describe it.

The voluptuous man who reasons disdains greediness, rejects with contempt lust and lewdness and spurns the brutal revenge which is caused by a first impulse of anger; but he is dainty and satisfies his appetite only in a manner in harmony with his nature and his tastes; he is amorous, but he enjoys himself with the object of his love only when he is certain that she will share his enjoyment, which can never be the case unless their love is mutual; if he is offended, he does not care for revenge until he has calmly considered the best means to enjoy it fully. If he is sometimes more cruel than necessary, he consoles himself with the idea that he has acted under the empire of reason; and his revenge is sometimes so noble that he finds it in forgiveness. Those three operations are the work of the soul which, to procure enjoyment for itself, becomes the agent of our passions. We sometimes suffer from hunger in order to enjoy better the food which will allay it; we delay the amorous enjoyment for the sake of making it more intense, and we put off the moment of our revenge in order to make it more certain. It is true, however, that one may die from indigestion, that we often allow ourselves to be deceived in love and that the creature we want to annihilate often escapes our revenge; but perfection cannot be attained in anything, and those are risks which we run most willingly.

CHAPTER 40

THERE is nothing, there can be nothing dearer to a thinking being than life; yet the voluptuous men, those who try to enjoy it in the best manner, are the men who practise with the greatest perfection the difficult art of shortening life, of driving it fast. They do not mean to make it shorter, for they would like to perpetuate it in the midst of pleasure, but they wish enjoyment to render its course insensible; and they are right, provided they do not fail in fulfilling their duties. Man must not, however, imagine that he has no other duties but those which gratify his senses; he would be greatly mistaken, and he might fall the victim of his own error. I think that my friend Horace made a mistake when he said to Florus:

*Nec metuum quid de me iudicet heres,
Quod non plura datis inveniet.*

The happiest man is the one who knows how to obtain the greatest sum of happiness without ever failing in the discharge of his duties, and the most unhappy is the man who has adopted a profession in which he finds himself constantly under the sad necessity of foreseeing the future.

Perfectly certain that M— M— would keep her word, I went to

the convent at ten o'clock in the morning, and she joined me in the parlour as soon as I was announced.

"Good heavens!" she exclaimed, "are you ill?"

"No, but I may well look so, for the expectation of happiness wears me out. I have lost sleep and appetite, and, if my felicity were to be deferred, my life would be the forfeit."

"There shall be no delay, dearest; but how impatient you are! Let us sit down. Here is the key of my casino. You will find some persons in it, because we must be served; but nobody will speak to you, and you need not speak to anyone. You must be masked, and you must not go there till two hours after sunset—mind, not before. Then go up the stairs opposite the street door, and at the top of those stairs you will see by the light of a lamp a green door which you will open to enter the apartment, which you will find lighted. You will find me in the second room, and, in case I should not be there, you will wait for me a few minutes; you may rely upon my being punctual. You can take off your mask in that room and make yourself comfortable; you will find some books and a good fire."

The description could not be clearer; I kissed the hand which was giving me the key of that mysterious temple and inquired from the charming woman whether I should see her in her conventual garb.

"I always leave the convent with it," she said, "but I have at the casino a complete wardrobe to transform myself into an elegant woman of the world, and even to disguise myself."

"I hope you will do me the favour of remaining in the dress of a nun."

"Why so, I beg?"

"I love to see you in that dress."

"Ah! ah! I understand. You fancy that my head is shaved, and you are afraid. But comfort yourself, dear friend, my wig is so beautifully made that it defies detection; it is nature itself."

"Oh, dear! what are you saying? The very name of 'wig' is awful. But no, you may be certain that I will find you lovely under all circumstances. I only entreat you not to put on that cruel wig in my presence. Do I offend you? Forgive me; I am very sorry to have mentioned that subject. Are you sure that no one can see you leave the convent?"

"You will be sure of it yourself when you have gone around the island and seen the small door on the shore. I have the key of a room opening on the shore, and I have every confidence in the sister who serves me."

"And the gondola?"

"My lover himself answers for the fidelity of the gondoliers."

"What a man that lover is! I fancy he must be an old man."

"You are mistaken; if he were old, I should be ashamed. He is not forty, and he has everything necessary to be loved—beauty, wit, sweet temper and noble behaviour."

"And he forgives your amorous caprices?"

"What do you mean by 'caprices'? A year ago he obtained possession of me, and before him I had never belonged to a man; you are the first who inspired me with a fancy. When I confessed to him, he was rather surprised, then he laughed and read me a short lecture upon the risk I was running in trusting a man who might prove indiscreet. He wanted to know at least who you were before going any further, but it was too late. I answered for your discretion, and of course I made him laugh by my being so positively the guarantor of a man whom I did not know."

"When did you confide in him?"

"The day before yesterday, and without concealing anything from him. I showed him my letters and yours; he thinks you are a Frenchman, although you represent yourself as a Venetian. He is very curious to know who you are, but you need not be afraid; I promise you faithfully never to take any steps to find it out myself."

"And I promise you likewise not to try to find out who is this wonderful man, as wonderful as you are yourself. I am very miserable when I think of the sorrow I have caused you."

"Do not mention that subject any more; when I consider the matter, I see that only a conceited man would have acted differently."

Before leaving her, she granted me another token of her affection through the little window, and her gaze followed me as far as the door.

In the evening, at the time named by her, I repaired to the casino, and, obeying all her instructions, I reached a sitting-room in which I found my new conquest dressed in a most elegant costume. The room was lighted up by girandoles, which were reflected by the looking-glasses and by four splendid candlesticks placed on a table covered with books. M— M— struck me as entirely different in her beauty to what she had seemed in the garb of a nun. She wore no cap, and her hair was fastened behind in a thick twist; but I passed rapidly over that part of her person, because I could not bear the idea of a wig, and I could not compliment her about it. I threw myself at her feet to show her my deep gratitude, and I kissed with rapture her beautiful hands, waiting impatiently for the amorous contest which I was longing for; but M— M— thought fit to oppose some resistance. Oh, how sweet they are, those denials of a loving mistress who delays the happy moment only for the sake of enjoying its delights better! As a lover, respectful, tender, but bold, enterprising, certain of victory, I blended delicately the gentleness of my proceedings with the ardent fire which was consuming me, and, stealing the most voluptuous kisses from the most beautiful mouth, I felt as if my soul would burst from my body. We spent two hours in the preliminary contest, at the end of which we congratulated one another, on her part for having contrived to resist, on mine for having controlled my impatience.

Wanting a little rest and understanding each other as if by a natural instinct, she said to me, "My dear, I have an appetite which promises to do honour to the supper; are you able to keep me good company?"

"Yes," I said, knowing well what I could do in that line, "yes, I can; and afterwards you shall judge whether I am able to sacrifice to Love as well as to Comus."

She rang the bell, and a woman, middle-aged but well dressed and respectable-looking, laid out a table for two persons; she then placed on another table close by all that was necessary to enable us to do without attendance, and she brought, one after the other, eight different dishes in Sèvres porcelain placed on silver heaters. It was a delicate and plentiful supper.

When I tasted the first dish, I at once recognised the French style of cooking, and she did not deny it. We drank nothing but burgundy and champagne. She dressed the salad cleverly and quickly, and in everything she did I had to admire the graceful ease of her manners. It was evident that she owed her education to a lover who was a first-rate connoisseur. I was curious to know him, and, as we were drinking some punch, I told her that, if she would gratify my curiosity in that respect, I was ready to tell her my name.

"Let time, dearest," she answered, "satisfy our mutual curiosity."

M— M— had amongst the charms and trinkets fastened to the chain of her watch a small crystal bottle exactly similar to the one that I wore myself. I called her attention to that fact, and, as mine was filled with cotton soaked in otto of roses, I had her smell it.

"I have the same," she observed.

And she had me inhale its fragrance.

"It is a very scarce perfume," I said, "and very expensive."

"Yes; in fact it cannot be bought."

"Very true; the inventor of that essence wears a crown; it is the King of France; His Majesty made a pound of it, which cost him thirty thousand crowns."

"Mine was a gift presented to my lover, and he gave it to me."

"Madame de Pompadour sent a small phial of it to M. de Mocenigo, the Venetian ambassador in Paris, through M. de B—, now French ambassador here."

"Do you know him?"

"I had the honour to dine with him on the very day he came to take leave of the ambassador by whom he had been invited. M. de B— is a man whom Fortune has smiled upon, but he captivated her by his merit; he is not less distinguished by his talents than by his birth; he is, I believe, Count de Lyon. I recollect that he was nicknamed Belle Babet, on account of his handsome face. There is a small collection of poetry written by him which does him great honour."

It was near midnight; we had made an excellent supper, and we were near a good fire. Besides, I was in love with a beautiful woman, and, thinking that time was precious, I became very pressing; but she resisted.

"Cruel darling, have you promised me happiness only to make me suffer the tortures of Tantalus? If you will not give way to love, at least obey the laws of nature; after such a delicious supper, go to bed."

"Are you sleepy?"

"Of course I am not; but it is late enough to go to bed. Allow me to undress you; I will remain by your bedside, or even go away if you wish it."

"If you were to leave me, you would grieve me much."

"My grief would be as great as yours, believe me; but, if I remain, what shall we do!"

"We can lie down in our clothes on this sofa."

"With our clothes! Well, let it be so; I will let you sleep if you wish it; but you must forgive me if I do not sleep myself; for to sleep near you and without undressing would be impossible."

"Wait a little."

She rose from her seat, turned the sofa crosswise, opened it, took out pillows, sheets, blankets, and in one minute we had a splendid bed, wide and convenient. She took a large handkerchief, which she wrapped round my head, and she gave me another, asking me to render her the same service. I began my task, dissembling my disgust for the wig, but a precious discovery caused me the most agreeable surprise; for, instead of the wig, my hands found the most magnificent hair I had ever seen. I uttered a scream of delight and admiration which made her laugh, and she told me that a nun was under no obligation other than to conceal her hair from the uninitiated. Thereupon she pushed me adroitly and made me fall on the sofa. I got up again and, having thrown off my clothes as quick as lightning, threw myself on her rather than beside her. She was very strong and, folding me in her arms, she thought that I ought to forgive her for all the torture she was condemning me to. I had not obtained any essential favour; I was burning but trying to master my impatience, for I did not think that I had yet the right to be exacting. I contrived to undo five or six bows of ribbons, and, satisfied with her not opposing any resistance in that quarter, my heart throbbed with pleasure, and I possessed myself of the most beautiful bosom, which I smothered under my kisses. But her favours went no further; and, my excitement increasing in proportion to the new perfections I discovered in her, I doubled my efforts; all in vain. At last, compelled to give way to fatigue, I fell asleep in her arms, holding her tightly against me. A noisy chime of bells woke us.

"What is the matter?" I exclaimed.

"Let us get up, dearest; it is time for me to return to the convent."

"Dress and let me have the pleasure of seeing you in the garb of a saint, since you are going away a virgin."

"Be satisfied for this time, dearest, and learn from me how to practise abstinence; we shall be happier another time. When I have gone, if you have nothing to hurry you, you can rest here."

She rang the bell, and the same woman who had appeared in the evening, and was most likely the secret minister and the confidante of her amorous mysteries, came in. After her hair had been dressed, she took off her gown, locked up her jewellery in her bureau, put on

the stays of a nun, in which she hid the two magnificent globes which had been during that fatiguing night the principal agents of my happiness, and assumed her monastic robes. The woman having gone out to call the gondoliers, M— M— kissed me warmly and tenderly and said to me, "I expect to see you the day after to-morrow, so as to hear from you which night I am to meet you in Venice; and then, my beloved lover, you shall be happy and I, too. Farewell."

Pleased without being satisfied, I went to bed and slept soundly until noon.

I left the casino without seeing anyone and, being well masked, repaired to the house of Laura, who gave me a letter from my dear C— C—. Here is a copy of it:

"I am going to give you, my best beloved, a specimen of my way of thinking; and I trust that, far from lowering me in your estimation, you will judge me, in spite of my youth, capable of keeping a secret and worthy of being your wife. Certain that your heart is mine, I do not blame you for having made a mystery of certain things, and, not being jealous of what can divert your mind and help you to bear patiently our cruel separation, I can only delight in whatever procures you some pleasure. Listen now. Yesterday, as I was going along one of the halls, I dropped a toothpick which I was holding in my hand, and to get it again, I was compelled to displace a stool which happened to be in front of a crack in the partition. I have already become as curious as a nun, a fault very natural to idle people; I placed my eye against the small opening, and whom did I see? You in person, my darling, conversing in the most lively manner with my charming friend, Sister M— M—. It would be difficult for you to imagine my surprise and joy. But those two feelings gave way soon to the fear of being seen and of exciting the curiosity of some inquisitive nun. I quickly replaced the stool and went away. Tell me all, dearest friend; you will make me happy. How could I cherish you with all my soul and not be anxious to know the history of your adventure? Tell me if she knows you and how you made her acquaintance. She is my best friend, the one of whom I have spoken so often to you in my letters, without thinking it necessary to tell you her name. She is the friend who teaches me French and has lent me books which gave me a great deal of information on a matter generally little known to women. If it had not been for her, the cause of the accident which has been so near costing me my life, would have been discovered. She gave me sheets and linen immediately; to her I owe my honour, but she necessarily learned in that way that I have a lover, as I know that she has one; but neither of us has shown any anxiety to know the secrets of the other. Sister M— M— is a rare woman. I feel certain, dearest, that you love one another; it cannot be otherwise, since you are acquainted; but, as I am not jealous of that affection, I deserve that you should tell me all. I pity you both, however; for all you may do will, I fear,

only irritate your passion. Everyone in the convent thinks that you are ill, and I am longing to see you. Come at least once! Adieu."

The letter of C— C— inspired me with the deepest esteem for her, but it caused me great anxiety, because, although I felt every confidence in my dear little wife, the small crack in the wall might expose M— M— and myself to the inquisitive looks of other persons. Besides, I found myself compelled to deceive, and honour forbade me to tell her the truth. I wrote her immediately that her friendship for M— M— made it her duty to warn her friend at once that she had seen her in the parlour with a masked gentleman. I added that, having heard a great deal of M— M—'s merit and wishing to make her acquaintance, I had called on her under an assumed name, that I entreated her not to tell her friend who I was, but she might say that she had recognised in me the gentleman who attended their church. I assured her with barefaced impudence that there was no love between M— M— and me, but without concealing that I thought her a superior woman.

On the feast of St. Catherine, the patroness of my dear C— C—, I bethought myself of affording that lovely prisoner the pleasure of seeing me. As I was leaving the church after mass and just as I was going to take a gondola, I observed that a man was following me. It looked suspicious, and I determined to ascertain whether I was right. The man took a gondola and followed mine. It might have been purely accidental; but, keeping on my guard for fear of surprise, I alighted in Venice at the Morosini Palace; the fellow alighted at the same place; his intentions were evident. I left the palace, and, turning towards the Flanders Gate I stopped in a narrow street, took my knife in my hand, waited for the spy, seized him by the collar and, pushing him against the wall with the knife at his throat, commanded him to tell me what business he had with me. Trembling all over, he would have confessed everything, but unluckily someone entered the street. The spy escaped, and I was no wiser, but I had no doubt that in future that fellow at least would keep at a respectful distance. It showed me how easy it would be for an obstinate spy to discover my identity, and I made up my mind never to go to Muran but with a mask or at night.

The next day I had to see my beautiful nun in order to ascertain which day she would sup with me in Venice, and I went early to the convent. She did not keep me waiting, and her face was radiant with joy. She complimented me upon having resumed my attendance at their church; all the nuns had been delighted to see me again after an absence of three weeks.

"The abbess," she said, "told me how glad she was to see you, and that she was certain to find out who you are."

I then related to her the adventure of the spy, and we both thought it was most likely the means taken by the sainted woman to gratify her curiosity about me.

"I have resolved not to attend your church any more."

"That will be a great deprivation to me, but in our common interest I can but approve your resolution."

She related the affair of the treacherous crack in the partition, and added:

"It is already repaired, and there is no longer any fear in that quarter. I heard of it from a young boarder whom I love dearly and who is much attached to me. I am not curious to know her name, and she has never mentioned it to me."

"Now, darling angel, tell me whether my happiness will be postponed."

"Yes, but for only twenty-four hours; the new professed sister has invited me to supper in her room, and you must understand I cannot invent any plausible excuse for refusing her invitation."

"You would not, then, tell her in confidence the very legitimate obstacle which would make me wish that she never take supper?"

"Certainly not; we never trust anyone so far in a convent. Besides, dearest, such an invitation cannot be declined unless I wish to gain a most bitter enemy."

"Could you not say that you are ill?"

"Yes; but then the visits!"

"I understand; if you should refuse, the escape might be suspected."

"The escape? Impossible! Here no one admits the possibility of breaking out of the convent."

"Then you are the only one able to perform that miracle?"

"You may be sure of that; but, as is always the case, it is gold which performs that miracle."

"And many others, perhaps."

"Oh! the time has gone by for them! But tell me, my love, where will you wait for me to-morrow, two hours after the setting of the sun?"

"Could I not wait for you at your casino?"

"No, because my lover will take me himself to Venice."

"Your lover?"

"Yes, himself."

"It is not possible."

"Yet it is true."

"I can wait for you in St. John and St. Paul's Square behind the pedestal of the statue of Bartholomew of Bergamo."

"I have never seen either the square or the statue except in engravings; it is enough, however, and I will not fail. Nothing but very stormy weather could prevent me from coming to a rendezvous for which my heart is panting."

"And if the weather should be bad?"

"Then, dearest, there would be nothing lost, and you would come here again in order to appoint another day."

I had no time to lose, for I had no casino. I took a second row, so as to reach St. Mark's Square more rapidly, and I immediately set to work looking for what I wanted. When a mortal is so lucky as to

be in the good graces of the god Plutus, and is not crack-brained, he is pretty sure to succeed in everything; I had not to search very long before I found a casino suiting my purpose exactly. It was the finest in the neighbourhood of Venice, but, as a natural consequence, it was likewise the most expensive. It had belonged to the English ambassador, who had sold it cheap to his cook before leaving Venice. The owner let it to me until Easter for one hundred sequins, which I paid in advance on condition that he would himself cook the dinners and the suppers I might order.

I had five rooms, furnished in the most elegant style, and everything seemed to be calculated for love, pleasure and good cheer. The service of the dining-room was made through a sham window in the wall, provided with a dumb-waiter revolving upon itself and fitting the window so exactly that masters and servants could not see each other. The drawing-room was decorated with magnificent looking-glasses, crystal chandeliers, girandoles in gilt and bronze and a splendid pier-glass placed on a chimney of white marble; the walls were covered with small squares of real china, representing little Cupids and naked amorous couples in all sorts of positions, well calculated to excite the imagination; elegant and very comfortable sofas were placed on every side. Next to it was an octagonal room, the walls, the ceiling and the floor of which were entirely covered with splendid Venetian glass, arranged in such a manner as to reflect on all sides every position of the amorous couple enjoying the pleasures of love. Close by was a beautiful alcove with two secret outlets; on the right, an elegant dressing-room; on the left, a boudoir which seemed to have been arranged by the Mother of Love, with a bath in Carrara marble. Everywhere the wainscots were embossed in ormolu or painted with flowers and arabesques.

After I had given my orders for all the chandeliers to be filled with wax candles and the finest linen to be provided wherever necessary, I ordered a most delicate and sumptuous supper for two, without regard to expense, and especially the most exquisite wines. I then took possession of the key of the principal entrance and warned the master that I did not want to be seen by anyone when I came in or went out.

I observed with pleasure that the clock in the alcove had an alarm, for I was beginning, in spite of love, to be easily influenced by the power of sleep.

Everything being arranged according to my wishes, I went, as a careful and delicate lover, to purchase the finest slippers I could find and a cap in Alençon point.

I trust my reader does not think me too particular; let him recollect that I was to receive the most accomplished of the sultanas of the master of the universe, and I had told that fourth Grace that I had a casino. Was I to begin by giving her a bad idea of my truthfulness?

At the appointed time—that is, two hours after sunset—I repaired to my palace; and it would be difficult to imagine the surprise of his honour the French cook when he saw me arrive alone. Not finding

all the chandeliers lighted up as I had ordered, I scolded him well, giving him notice that I did not like to repeat an order.

"I shall not fail, sir, another time, to execute your commands."

"Let the supper be served."

"Your honour ordered it for two."

"Yes, for two; and this time be present during my supper so that I can tell you which dishes I find good or bad."

The supper came through the revolving dumbwaiter in very good order, two dishes at a time. I passed some remarks upon everything; but, to tell the truth, everything was excellent: game, fish, oysters, truffles, wine, dessert and the whole served in a very fine Dresden china and silver-gilt plate.

I told him that he had forgotten hardboiled eggs, anchovies and prepared vinegar to dress a salad. He lifted his eyes towards heaven, as if to plead guilty to a very heinous crime.

After a supper which lasted two hours and during which I must certainly have won the admiration of my host, I asked him to bring me the bill. He presented it to me shortly afterwards, and I found it reasonable. I then dismissed him and lay down on the splendid bed in the alcove; my excellent supper brought on very soon the most delicious sleep, which, but for the burgundy and champagne, might very likely not have visited me if I had not thought that the following night would see me in the same place and in possession of a lovely divinity. It was broad daylight when I awoke, and, after ordering the finest fruit and some ices for the evening, I left the casino. In order to shorten a day which my impatient desires would have caused me to find very long, I went to the faro table and saw with pleasure that I was as great a favourite with Fortune as with Love. Everything proceeded according to my wishes, and I delighted in ascribing my happy success to the influence of my nun.

I was at the place of meeting one hour before the time appointed, and, although the night was cold, I did not feel it. Precisely as the hour struck, I saw a two-oared gondola reach the shore and a mask come out of it, speak a few words to the gondolier and take the direction of the statue. My heart was beating quickly, but, seeing that it was a man, I avoided him and regretted not having brought my pistols. The mask, however, turning round the statue, came up to me with outstretched hands; I then recognised my angel, who was amused at my surprise and took my arm. Without speaking, we went towards St. Mark's Square and reached my casino, which was only one hundred yards from the St. Moses Theatre.

I found everything in good order; we went upstairs and I threw off my mask and my disguise; but M— M— took delight in walking about the rooms and examining every nook of the charming place in which she was received. Highly gratified to see me admire the grace of her person, she wanted me likewise to admire in her attire the taste and generosity of her lover. She was surprised at the almost magic spell which, although she remained motionless, showed her lovely per-

son in a thousand different manners. Her multiplied portraits, reproduced by the looking-glasses and the numerous candles disposed for that purpose, offered to her sight a spectacle entirely new to her and from which she could not withdraw her eyes. Sitting down on a stool, I contemplated her elegant person with rapture. A coat of rosy velvet, embroidered with gold spangles, a vest to match, embroidered likewise in the richest fashion, breeches of black satin, diamond buckles, a solitaire of great value on her little finger, and on the other hand a ring—such was her toilet. Her black lace mask was remarkable for its fineness and the beauty of the design. To enable me to see her better, she stood before me. I looked in her pockets, in which I found a gold snuffbox, a sweetmeat-box adorned with pearls, a gold case, a splendid opera glass, handkerchiefs of the finest cambric, soaked rather than perfumed with the most precious essences. I examined attentively the richness and the workmanship of her two watches, her chains, her trinkets, brilliant with diamonds. The last article I found was a pistol; it was an English weapon of fine steel and of the most beautiful finish.

"All I see, my divine angel, is not worthy of you; yet I cannot refrain from expressing my admiration for the wonderful—I might almost say adorable—being who wants to convince you that you are truly his mistress."

"This is what he said when I asked him to bring me to Venice and leave me. 'Amuse yourself,' he said, 'and I hope that the man whom you are going to make happy will convince you that he is worthy of it.'"

"He is indeed an extraordinary man, and I do not think there is another like him. Such a lover is a unique being; and I feel that I could not be like him, as deeply as I fear to be unworthy of a happiness which dazzles me."

"Allow me to leave you and take off these clothes alone."

"Do anything you please."

A quarter of an hour afterwards my mistress came back to me. Her hair was dressed like a man's; the front locks came down her cheeks, and the back hair, fastened with a knot of blue ribbon, reached the bend of her legs; her form was that of Antinous; her clothes alone, being cut in the French style, prevented the illusion from being complete. I was in a state of ecstatic delight and could not realise my happiness.

"No, adorable woman," I exclaimed, "you are not made for a mortal, and I do not believe that you will ever be mine. At the very moment of possessing you some miracle will wrest you from my arms. Your divine spouse, perhaps, jealous of a simple mortal, will annihilate all my hope. It is possible that in a few minutes I shall no longer exist."

"Are you mad, dearest? I am yours this very instant if you wish it."

"Ah! if I wish it! Although we have not dined, come! Love and happiness will be my food!"

She felt cold, we sat near the fire; and, unable to master my impatience, I unfastened a diamond brooch which pinned her ruffle. Dear reader, there are some sensations so powerful and so sweet that years

cannot weaken the remembrance of them. My mouth had already covered with kisses that ravishing bosom; but the troublesome corset had not allowed me to admire all its perfection. Now I felt it free from all restraint and from all unnecessary support; I have never seen, never touched anything more beautiful, and the two magnificent globes of the *Vénus de Médicis*, even if they had been animated by the spark of life given by Prometheus, would have yielded the palm to those of my divine nun.

I was burning with ardent desires and would have satisfied them on the spot if my adorable mistress had not calmed my impatience by these simple words, "Wait until after supper."

I rang the bell; she shuddered.

"Do not be anxious, dearest."

And I showed her the secret of the sham window.

"You will be able to tell your lover that no one saw you."

"He will appreciate your delicate attention, and that will prove to him that you are not a novice in the art of love. But it is evident that I am not the only one who enjoys with you the delights of this charming residence."

"You are wrong, believe me; you are the first woman I have seen here. You are not, adorable creature, my first love, but you shall be the last."

"I shall be happy if you are faithful. My lover is constant, kind, gentle and amiable; yet my heart has ever been fancy-free with him."

"Then his own heart must be the same; for, if his love were of the same nature as mine, you would never have made me happy."

"He loves me as I love you; do you believe in my love for you?"

"Yes, I want to believe in it; but you would not allow me to . . ."

"Do not say any more, for I feel that I could forgive you anything, provided you told me all. The joy I experience at this moment is caused more by the hope I have of gratifying your desires than by the idea that I am going to pass a delightful night with you. It will be the first in my life."

"What! Have you never passed such a night with your lover?"

"Several; but friendship, compliance and gratitude, perhaps, were then the only contributors to our pleasures; the most essential—love—was never present. In spite of that, my lover is like you; his wit is lively, very much the same as yours, and, as far as his features are concerned, he is very handsome; yet it is not you. I believe him more wealthy than you, although this casino almost convinces me that I am mistaken; but what does love care for riches? Do not imagine that I consider you endowed with less merit than he because you confess yourself incapable of his heroism in allowing me to enjoy another love. Quite the contrary; I know that you would not love me as you do if you told me that you could be as indulgent as he is for one of my caprices."

"Will he be curious to hear the particulars of this night?"

"Most likely he will think that he will please me by asking what has

taken place, and I will tell him everything, except such details as might humiliate him."

After the supper, which she found excellent, she made some punch, and she was a very good hand at it. But I felt my impatience growing stronger every moment, and I said, "Recollect that we have only seven hours before us and that we should be very foolish to waste them in this room."

"You reason better than Socrates," she answered, "and your eloquence has convinced me. Come!"

She led me to the elegant dressing-room, and I offered her the fine nightcap which I had brought for her, asking her at the same time to dress her hair like a woman. She took it with great pleasure and begged me to go and undress in the drawing-room, promising to call me as soon as she was in bed.

I had not long to wait; when pleasure is waiting for us, we all go quickly to work. I fell into her arms, intoxicated with love and happiness, and during seven hours I gave her the most positive proofs of my ardour and of the feelings I entertained for her. It is true that she taught me nothing new, materially speaking, but a great deal in sighs, in ecstasies, in enjoyments which can have their full development only in a sensitive soul in the sweetest of all moments. I varied our pleasures in a thousand different ways and astonished her by making her feel that she was susceptible of greater enjoyment than she had any idea of. At last the fatal alarum was heard; we had to stop our amorous transports; but, before she left my arms, she raised her eyes towards heaven, as if to thank her Divine Master for having given her the courage to declare her passion to me.

We dressed, and, observing that I put the lace nightcap in her pocket, she assured me that she would keep it all her life as a witness of the happiness which overwhelmed her. After drinking a cup of coffee, we went out, and I left her at St. John and St. Paul's Square, promising to call on her the day after the morrow; I watched her until I saw her safe in her gondola, and then I went to bed. Ten hours of profound sleep restored me to my usual state of vigour.

CHAPTER 41

ACCORDING to my promise, I went to see M— M— two days afterwards; but, as soon as she came to the parlour, she told me that her lover had said he was coming and that she expected him every minute and would be glad to see me the next day. I took leave of her, but near the bridge I saw a man, rather badly masked, coming out of a gondola. I looked at the gondolier and recognised him as being in the service of the French ambassador. "It is he," I said to myself, and, without appearing to observe him, I watched him enter the convent. I had no longer any doubt as to his identity and returned to Venice delighted at having

made the discovery, but I made up my mind not to say anything to my mistress.

I saw her on the following day, and we had a long conversation together, which I am now going to relate.

"My friend," she said to me, "came yesterday in order to bid farewell to me until the Christmas holidays. He is going to Padua, but everything has been arranged so that we can sup at his casino whenever we wish."

"Why not in Venice?"

"He has begged me not to go there during his absence. He is wise and prudent; I could not refuse his request."

"You are quite right. When shall we sup together?"

"Next Sunday, if you like."

"'If I like' is not the right expression, for I always like. On Sunday, then, I will go to the casino towards nightfall and wait for you with a book. Have you told your friend that you were not very uncomfortable in my small palace?"

"He knows all about it; but, dearest, he is afraid of one thing—he fears a certain fatal plumpness..."

"On my life, I never thought of that! But, my darling, do you not run the same risk with him?"

"No, it is impossible."

"I understand you. Then we must be very prudent in future. I believe that, nine days before Christmas, the mask is no longer allowed, and then I shall have to go to your casino by water; otherwise, I might easily be recognised by the same spy who has already followed me once."

"Yes; that idea proves your prudence, and I can easily show you the place. I hope you will be able to come also during Lent, although we are told that at that time God wishes us to mortify our senses. Is it not strange that there is a time during which God wants us to amuse ourselves almost to frenzy and another during which, in order to please Him, we must love in complete abstinence? What is there in common between a yearly observance and the Deity, and how can the action of the creature have any influence over the Creator, whom my reason cannot conceive otherwise than independent? It seems to me that, if God had created man with the power of offending him, man would be right in doing everything that is forbidden to him because the deficiencies of his organisation would be the work of the Creator Himself. How can we imagine God grieved during Lent?"

"My beloved one, you reason beautifully; but will you tell me how you have managed, in a convent, to make such progress?"

"Yes. My friend gave me some good books which I read with deep attention, and the light of truth dispelled the darkness which had blinded my eyes. I can assure you that, when I look into my own heart, I find myself more fortunate in having met with a person who has brought light to my mind than miserable at having taken the veil, for the greatest happiness must certainly consist in living and dying peacefully—a happiness which can hardly be obtained by listening to all the idle talk with which the priests puzzle our brains."

"I am of your opinion; but I admire you, for it must have been the work of more than a few months to bring light to a mind prejudiced as yours was."

"There is no doubt that I should have seen light much sooner if I had not laboured under so many prejudices. There was in my mind a curtain dividing truth from error, and reason alone could draw it aside; but that poor reason—I had been taught to fear it, to repulse it, as if its bright flame would have devoured, instead of enlightening, me. The moment it was proved to me that a reasonable being ought to be guided only by his own inductions, I acknowledged the sway of reason, and the mist which hid truth from me was dispelled. The evidence of truth alone shone before my eyes, nonsensical trifles disappeared, and I have no fear of their resuming their influence over my mind, for every day it is getting stronger; and I may say that I began to love God only when my mind was disabused of priestly superstitions concerning Him."

"I congratulate you; you have been more fortunate than I, for you have made more progress in one year than I have made in ten."

"Then you did not begin by reading the writings of Lord Bolingbroke? Five or six months ago, I was reading *La Sagesse*, by Charron, and somehow or other my confessor heard of it; when I went to him for confession, he took upon himself to tell me to give up reading that book. I answered that my conscience did not reproach me and that I could not obey him. 'In that case,' replied he, 'I will not give you absolution.' 'That will not prevent me from taking the communion,' I said. This made him angry, and, in order to know what he ought to do, he applied to Bishop Diedo. His Eminence came to see me and told me that I ought to be guided by my confessor. I answered that we had mutual duties to perform and that the mission of a priest in the confessional was to listen to me, impose a reasonable penance and give me absolution; that he had not even the right of offering me any advice if I did not ask for it. I added that, the confessor being bound to avoid scandal, if he dared to refuse me the absolution—which, of course, he could do—I would all the same go to the altar with the other nuns. The bishop, seeing that he was at his wit's end, told the priest to abandon me to my conscience. But that was not satisfactory to me, and my lover obtained a brief from the Pope authorising me to go to confession to any priest I like. All the sisters are jealous of the privilege, but I have availed myself of it only once, for the sake of establishing a precedent and strengthening the right by the act; for it is not worth the trouble. I always confess to the same priest, and he has no difficulty in giving me absolution, for I tell him only what I like."

"And as for the rest, you absolve yourself?"

"I confess to God, Who alone can know my thoughts and judge the degree of merit or of demerit to be attached to my actions."

Our conversation showed me that my lovely friend was what is called a freethinker; but I was not astonished at it, because she felt a greater need of peace for her conscience than gratification for her senses.

On the Sunday, after dinner, I took a two-oared gondola and went

round the island of Muran to reconnoitre the shore and discover the small door through which my mistress escaped from the convent; I wasted my pains and my time, for I did not become acquainted with the shore till the octave of Christmas and with the small door six months afterwards. I shall mention the circumstance in its proper place.

As soon as it was time, I repaired to the temple and, while I was waiting for the idol, amused myself in examining the books of a small library in the boudoir. They were not numerous, but they were well chosen and worthy of the place. I found there everything that has been written against religion, and all the works of the most voluptuous writers on pleasure—attractive books, the incendiary style of which compels the reader to seek the reality of the image they represent. Several folios, richly bound, contained nothing but erotic engravings. Their principal merit consisted much more in the beauty of the designs and the finish of the work than in the lubricity of the positions. I found amongst them the prints of the Portier des Chartreux, published in England, the engravings of Meursius, of Aloysia Sigee Toletana and others, all very beautifully done. A great many small pictures covered the walls of the boudoir, and they were all masterpieces in the same style as the engravings.

I had spent an hour in examining all these works of art, the sight of which had excited me in the most irresistible manner, when I saw my beautiful mistress enter the room, dressed as a nun. Her appearance was not likely to act as a sedative, and therefore, without losing any time in compliments, I said to her:

"You arrive most opportunely. All these erotic pictures have fired my imagination, and it is in your garb of a saint that you must administer the remedy that my love requires."

"Let me put on another dress, darling; it will not take more than five minutes."

"Five minutes will complete my happiness, and then you can attend to your metamorphosis."

"But let me take off these woollen robes, which I dislike."

"No; I want you to receive the homage of my love in the same dress which you had on when you gave birth to it."

She uttered in the humblest manner a *fiat voluntas tua*, accompanied by the most voluptuous smile, and sank on the sofa; for one instant we forgot all the world besides. After that delightful ecstasy I assisted her to undress, and a simple gown of Indian muslin soon metamorphosed my lovely nun into a beautiful nymph.

After an excellent supper, we agreed not to meet again till the first day of the octave. She gave me the key of the gate on the shore and told me that a blue ribbon attached to the window over the door would point it out by day, so as to prevent my making a mistake at night. I made her very happy by telling her I would come and reside in her casino until the return of her friend. During the ten days that I remained there, I saw her four times, and I convinced her that I lived only for her.

During my stay in the casino I amused myself in reading and writing to C— C—, but my love for her had become a calm affection. The lines which interested me most in her letters were those in which she mentioned her friend. She often blamed me for not having cultivated the acquaintance of M— M—, and my answer was that I had not done so for fear of being known; I always insisted upon the necessity of discretion.

I do not believe in the possibility of equal love being bestowed upon two persons at the same time, nor do I believe it possible to keep love to a high degree of intensity if you give it either too much food or none at all. That which maintained my passion for M— M— in a state of great vigour was that I could never possess her without running the risk of losing her.

"It is impossible," I said to her once, "that some time or other one of the nuns should not want to speak to you when you are absent."

"No," she answered, "that cannot happen, because there is nothing more religiously respected in a convent than the right of a nun to deny herself, even to the abbess. A fire is the only circumstance I have to fear, because in that case there would be general uproar and confusion and it would not appear natural that a nun should remain quietly locked up in her cell in the midst of such danger; my escape would then be discovered. I have contrived to win over the lay sister and the gardener, as well as another nun, and that miracle was performed by my cunning, assisted by my lover's gold. He answers for the fidelity of the cook and his wife who take care of the casino. He has likewise every confidence in the two gondoliers, although one of them is sure to be a spy of the State Inquisitors."

On Christmas Eve she announced the return of her lover, and she told him that on St. Stephen's Day she would go with him to the opera and they would afterwards spend the night together.

"I shall expect you, my beloved one," she added, "on the last day of the year, and here is a letter which I beg you not to read till you get home."

As I had to move in order to make room for her lover, I packed my things early in the morning and, bidding farewell to a place in which during ten days I had enjoyed so many delights, returned to the Bragadin Palace, where I read the following letter:

"You have somewhat offended me, my own darling, by telling me, respecting the mystery which I am bound to keep on the subject of my lover, that, satisfied to possess my heart, you left me mistress of my mind. That division of the heart and the mind appears to me a pure sophism; if it does not strike you as such, you must admit that you do not love me wholly, for I cannot exist without mind and you cannot cherish my heart if it does not agree with my mind. If your love can accept a different state of things, it does not excel in delicacy. However, as some circumstances might occur in which you might accuse me of not having acted towards you with all the sincerity that true love inspires and has a right to demand, I have made up my mind to confide

to you a secret which concerns my friend, although I am aware that he relies entirely upon my discretion. I shall certainly be guilty of a breach of confidence, but you will not love me less for it because, compelled to choose between you two and to deceive one or the other, love has conquered friendship; do not punish me for this, for it has not been done blindly, and you will, I trust, consider the reasons which have caused the scale to tip in your favour.

"When I found myself incapable of resisting my wish to know you and become intimate with you, I could not gratify that wish without taking my friend into my confidence, and I had no doubt of his compliance. He conceived a very favourable opinion of your character from your first letter, not only because you had chosen the parlour of the convent for our first interview, but also because you appointed his casino at Muran instead of your own. But he likewise begged of me to allow him to be present at our first meeting-place, in a small closet—a true hiding-place, from which one can see and hear everything without being suspected by those in the drawing-room. You have not yet seen that mysterious closet, but I will show it to you on the last day of the year. Tell me, dearest, whether I could refuse that singular request to the man who was showing me such compliant kindness? I consented, and it was natural for me not to let you know it. You are therefore aware now that my friend was a witness of all we did and said during the first night we spent together; but do not let that annoy you, for you pleased him in everything, in your behaviour towards me as well as in the witty sayings which you uttered to make me laugh. I was in great fear, when the conversation turned upon him, lest you would say something which might hurt his self-love; but, very fortunately, he heard only the most flattering compliments. Such is, dearest love, the sincere confession of my treason; but, as a wise lover, you will forgive me because it has not done you the slightest harm. My friend is extremely curious to ascertain who you are. But listen to me—that night you were natural and thoroughly amiable; would you have been the same, if you had known there was a witness? It is not likely; and, if I had acquainted you with the truth, you might have refused your consent, and perhaps you would have been right.

"Now that we know each other and you entertain no doubt, I trust, of my devoted love, I wish to ease my conscience and venture all. Learn then, dearest, that on the last day of the year my friend will be at the casino, which he will not leave until the next morning. You will not see him, but he will see us. As you are supposed not to know anything about it, you must feel that you will have to be natural in everything; otherwise, he might guess that I have betrayed the secret. It is especially in your conversation that you must be careful. My friend possesses every virtue except the theological one called 'faith,' and on that subject you can say anything you like. You will be at liberty to talk literature, travels, politics, anything you please, and you need not refrain from anecdotes. In fact you are certain of his approbation.

"Now, dearest, I have only this to say: Do you feel disposed to allow

yourself to be seen by another man while you are abandoning yourself to the sweet voluptuousness of your senses? That doubt causes all my anxiety, and I entreat from you an answer, 'yes' or 'no.' Do you understand how painful the doubt is for me? I expect not to close my eyes throughout the night, and I shall not rest until I have your decision."

This letter certainly took me by surprise; but, all things considered, thinking that my part was better than the one accepted by the lover, I laughed heartily at the proposal. I confess, however, that I should not have laughed if I had not known the nature of the individual who was to be the witness of my amorous exploits. Understanding all the anxiety of my friend and wishing to allay it, I immediately wrote to her the following lines:

"You wish me, heavenly creature, to answer you 'yes' or 'no'; and I, full of love for you, want my answer to reach you before noon, so that you may dine in perfect peace.

"I will spend the last night of the year with you, and I can assure you that the friend, to whom we will give a spectacle worthy of Paphos and Amathos, shall see or hear nothing likely to make him suppose that I am acquainted with his secret. You may be certain that I will play my part not as a novice but as a master. If it is man's duty to be always the slave of his reason, if, as long as he has control over himself, he ought not to act without taking it for his guide, I cannot understand why a man should be ashamed to show himself to a friend at the very moment that he is most favoured by love and nature.

"Yet I confess that you would have been wrong if you had confided the secret to me the first time and that most likely I should then have refused to grant you that mark of my compliance; not because I loved you less than I do now, but there are such strange tastes in nature that I might have imagined that your lover's ruling taste was to enjoy the sight of an ardent and frantic lover in the midst of amorous connection; and in that case, conceiving an unfavourable opinion of you, vexation might have frozen the love you had just sent through my being. Now, however, the case is very different; I know all I possess in you, and from all you have told me of your lover, I am well disposed towards him and believe him to be my friend. If a feeling of modesty does not deter you from showing yourself tender, loving and full of amorous ardour with me in his presence, how could I be ashamed when, on the contrary, I ought to feel proud of myself? I have no reason to blush at having made a conquest of you. I am aware that, owing to a feeling which is called 'natural' but which is perhaps only the result of civilisation and the effect of the prejudices inherent in youth, most men object to any witness in those moments; but those who cannot give any good reason for their repugnance must have in their nature something of the cat; at the same time, they might have some excellent reasons without their thinking themselves bound to give them, except to the woman, who is easily deceived. I excuse with all my heart those who know that they would excite only the pity of the witnesses; but we both have no

fear of that sort. All you have told me of your friend proves that he will enjoy our pleasures. But do you know what will be the result of it? The intensity of our ardour will excite his own, and he will throw himself at my feet, begging and entreating me to give up to him the only object likely to calm his amorous excitement. What could I do in that case? Give you up? I could hardly refuse to do so with good grace; but I would go away, for I could not remain a quiet spectator.

"Farewell, my darling love; all will be well, I have no doubt. Prepare yourself for the athletic contest and rely upon the fortunate being who adores you."

I spent the six following days with my three worthy friends and at the *ridotto*, which at that time was open on St. Stephen's Day. As I could not hold the cards there, patricians alone having the privilege of holding the bank, I played morning and evening and constantly lost, for whoever punts must lose. But the loss of the four or five thousand sequins I possessed, far from cooling my love, seemed only to increase its ardour.

At the end of the year 1774 the Great Council promulgated a law forbidding all games of chance, the first effect of which was to close the *ridotto*. This law was a real phenomenon, and, when the votes were taken out of the urn, the senators looked at each other with stupefaction. They had made the law unwittingly, for three-fourths of the voters objected to it and yet three-fourths of the votes were in favour of it. People said it was a miracle of St. Mark's, who had answered the prayers of Monsignor Flangini (then censor-in-chief, now cardinal) and of the three State Inquisitors.

On the day appointed I was punctual at the place of rendezvous and had not to wait for my mistress. She was in the dressing-room, where she had had time to attend to her toilet, and, as soon as she heard me, she came to me dressed with the greatest elegance.

"My friend is not yet at his post," she said to me, "but, the moment he is there, I will give you a wink."

"Where is the mysterious closet?"

"There it is. Look at the back of this sofa against the wall. All those flowers in relief have a hole in the centre which communicates with the closet behind that wall. There is a bed, a table and everything necessary to a person who wants to spend the night in amusing himself by looking at what is going on in this room. I will show it to you whenever you like."

"Was it arranged by your lover's orders?"

"No; for he could not foresee that he would use it."

"I understand that he may find great pleasure in such a sight; but, being unable to possess you at the very moment nature will make you most necessary to him, what will he do?"

"That is his business. Besides, he is at liberty to go away when he has had enough of it or to sleep if he has a mind to; but, if you play your part naturally, he will not feel any weariness."

"I will be most natural, but I must be more polite."

"No, no politeness, I beg; for, if you are polite, good-bye to nature."

Where have you ever seen, I should like to know, two lovers, excited by all the fury of love, think of politeness?"

"You are right, darling; but I must be more delicate."

"Very well, delicacy can do no harm; but no more than usual. Your letter greatly pleased me; you treated the subject like a man of experience."

I have already stated that my mistress was dressed most elegantly, but I ought to have added that it was the elegance of the Graces and did not in any way prevent ease and simplicity. I only wondered at her having used some paint for the face, but it rather pleased me because she had applied it according to the fashion of the ladies of Versailles. The charm of that style consists in the negligence with which the paint is applied. The rouge must not appear natural; it is used to please the eyes, which see in it the marks of an intoxication heralding the most amorous fury. She told me she had put it on to please her inquisitive friend, who was very fond of it.

"That taste," I said, "proves him to be a Frenchman."

As I was uttering these words, she made a sign to me; the friend was at his post, and now the play began.

"The more I look at you, beloved angel, the more I think you worthy of my adoration."

"But are you certain that you do not worship a cruel divinity?"

"Yes, and therefore I do not offer my sacrifices to appease you, but to excite you. You shall feel all through the night the ardour of my devotion."

"You will not find me insensible to your offerings."

"I would begin them at once, but I think that, in order to insure their efficiency, we ought to have supper first. I have taken nothing to-day but a cup of chocolate and a salad of whites of eggs dressed with oil from Lucca and Marseilles vinegar."

"But, dearest, it is folly! you must be ill?"

"Yes, I am just now; but I shall be all right when I have distilled the whites of eggs, one by one, into your amorous soul."

"I did not think you required any such stimulants."

"Who could want any with you? But I have a rational fear; for, if I happened to prime without being able to fire, I would blow my brains out."

"My dear browny, it would certainly be a misfortune, but there would be no occasion to be in despair on that account."

"You think that I would only have to prime again."

"Of course."

While we were bantering in this edifying fashion, the table had been laid, and we sat down to supper. She ate for two and I for four, our excellent appetite being excited by the delicate cheer. A sumptuous dessert was served in splendid silver-gilt plate, similar to the two candlesticks which held four wax candles each. Seeing that I admired them, she said, "They are a present from my friend."

"It is a magnificent present; did he give you the snuffers likewise?"

"No."

"It is a proof that your friend is a great nobleman."

"How so?"

"Because great lords have no idea of snuffing the candle."

"Our candles have wicks which never require that operation."

"Good! Tell me who taught you French."

"Old La Forest. I was his pupil for six years. He also taught me to write poetry; but you know a great many words which I have never heard from him, such as *à gogo*, *frustratoire*, *rater*, *dorloter*. Who taught you these words?"

"The good company in Paris, and women particularly."

We made some punch and amused ourselves in eating oysters after the voluptuous fashion of lovers; we sucked them in, one by one, after placing them on the other's tongue. Voluptuous reader, try it and tell me whether it is not the nectar of the gods!

At last joking was over, and I reminded her that we had to think of more substantial pleasures. "Wait here," she said, "I am going to change my dress. I shall be back in one minute." Left alone and not knowing what to do, I looked in the drawers of her writing-table. I did not touch the letters, but, finding a box full of certain preventive sheaths against the fatal and dreaded plumpness, I emptied it and placed in it the following lines instead of the stolen goods:

*Enfants de l'Amitié, ministres de la Peur,
Je suis l'Amour, tremblez, respectez le voleur!
Et toi, femme de Dieu, ne crains pas d'être mère;
Car si tu le deviens, Dieu seul sera le père.
S'il est dit cependant que tu veux le barrer,
Parle; je suis tout prêt, je me jetai châtrer.*

My mistress soon returned, dressed like a nymph. A gown of Indian muslin, embroidered with gold lilies, showed to admiration the outline of her voluptuous form, and her fine lace cap was worthy of a queen. I threw myself at her feet, entreating her not to delay my happiness any longer.

"Control your ardour a few moments," she said. "Here is the altar, and in a few minutes the victim will be in your arms."

"You will see," she added, going to her writing-table, "how far the delicacy and the kind attention of my friend can extend."

She took the box and opened it; but, instead of the pretty sheaths that she expected to see, she found my poetry. After reading it aloud, she called me a thief and, smothering me with kisses, entreated me to give her back what I had stolen; but I pretended not to understand. She then read the lines again, considered for one moment and, under pretence of getting a better pen, left the room, saying, "I am going to pay you in your own coin."

She came back after a few minutes and wrote the following six lines;

*Sans rien ôter au plaisir amoureux,
L'objet de ton larcin sert à combler nos vœux.
A l'abri du danger, mon âme satisfaite
Savoure en sûreté la volupté parfaite;
Et si tu veux jouir avec sécurité,
Rends-moi, mon doux ami, ces dons de l'amitié.*

After this I could not resist any longer, and I gave her back those objects so precious to a nun who wants to sacrifice on the altar of Venus.

The clock striking twelve, she arranged the sofa, saying that, the alcove being too cold, we had better sleep on it. But the true reason was that, to satisfy the curious lover, it was necessary for us to be seen.

Dear reader, a picture must have shadows, and there is nothing, no matter how beautiful from one point of view, that does not require to be sometimes veiled if you look at it from a different angle. In order to paint the diversified scene which took place between me and my lovely mistress until the dawn of day, I should have to use all the colours of Aretino's palette. She then resumed her costume of a nun, and, entreating me to lie down and to write to her before returning to Venice, so as to let her know how I was, she left the casino.

I had no difficulty in obeying her, for I was truly in great need of rest; I slept until evening. As soon as I awoke, I wrote to her that my health was excellent and that I felt quite inclined to begin our delightful contest all over again. I asked her to let me know how she was herself, and, after I had dispatched my letter, I returned to Venice.

CHAPTER 42

My dear M— M— had expressed a wish to have my portrait, something like the one I had given to C— C—, only larger, to wear it as a locket. The outside was to represent some saint, and an invisible spring was to remove the sainted picture and expose my likeness. I called upon the artist who had painted the other miniature for me, and in three sittings I had what I wanted. He afterwards made for me an *Annunciation* in which the Angel Gabriel was transformed into a dark-haired saint and the Holy Virgin into a beautiful, light-complexioned woman holding her arms towards the angel. The celebrated painter Mengs imitated that idea in the picture of *The Annunciation* which he painted in Madrid twelve years afterwards, but I do not know whether he had the same reasons for it as my painter. That allegory was of exactly the same size as my portrait, and the jeweller who made the locket arranged it in such a manner that no one could suppose the sacred image to be there only for the sake of hiding a profane likeness.

The 2nd of January, 1754, before going to the casino, I called upon Laura to give her a letter for C— C—, and she handed me one from

her which amused me. My beautiful nun had initiated that young girl, not only into the mysteries of Sappho, but also into high metaphysics, and C— C— had consequently become a freethinker. She wrote to me that, objecting to giving an account of her affairs to her confessor and yet not wishing to tell him falsehoods, she had made up her mind to tell him nothing.

"He has remarked," she added, "that perhaps I do not confess anything to him because I did not examine my conscience sufficiently, and I answered him that I had nothing to say, but that, if he liked, I would commit a few sins for the purpose of having something to tell him in confession."

I thought this reply worthy of a thorough sophist and laughed heartily.

On the same day I received the following letter from my adorable nun.

"I write to you from my bed, dearest brownny, because I cannot stand on my feet; I am almost dead. But I am not anxious about it; a little rest will make me all right, for I eat well and sleep soundly. You made me very happy by writing me that your bleeding has not had any evil consequences, and I give you fair notice that I shall have the proof of it on Twelfth Night, at least if you like; that is understood, and you will let me know. In case you should feel disposed to grant me that favour, my darling, I wish to go to the opera. At all events, recollect that I positively forbid the whites of eggs hereafter, for I would rather have a little less enjoyment and more security respecting your health. In future, when you go to the casino of Muran, please to inquire whether there is anybody there, and, if you receive an affirmative answer, go away; my friend will do the same. In that manner you will not run the risk of meeting one another; but you need not observe these precautions for long, for my friend is extremely fond of you and has a great desire to make your acquaintance if you are willing. He has told me that, if he had not seen it with his own eyes, he never would have believed that a man could run the race you ran so splendidly the other night; but he says that, by making love in that manner, you bid defiance to death, for he is certain that the blood you lose comes from the brain. But what will he say when he hears that you only laugh at the occurrence? I am going to make you laugh—he wants to eat the salad of whites of eggs and wants me to ask you for some of your vinegar because there is none in Venice. He said that he spent a delightful night, in spite of his fear of the evil consequences of our amorous sport, and he considered my own efforts superior to the usual weakness of my sex. That may be the case, dearest brownny, but I am delighted to have done such wonders, and to have made such trial of my strength. Without you, darling of my heart, I should have lived without knowing myself; I wonder whether it is possible for nature to create a woman who could remain insensible in your arms or, rather, one who would not receive new life by your side. It is more than love that I feel for you, it is idolatry; and my mouth, longing to

meet yours, sends forth thousands of kisses which are wasted in the air. I am panting for your divine portrait so as to quench by a sweet illusion the fire which devours my amorous lips. I trust my likeness will prove equally dear to you, for it seems to me that nature has created us for one another, and I curse the fatal instant in which I raised an invincible barrier between us. You will find enclosed the key of my bureau. Open it and take a parcel on which you will see written, 'For my darling.' It is a small present which my friend wishes me to offer you in exchange for the beautiful nightcap you gave me. Adieu."

The small key which she enclosed in the letter belonged to a bureau in the boudoir. Anxious to know the nature of the present that she could offer me at the instance of her friend, I opened the bureau and found a parcel containing a letter and a morocco-leather case.

The letter was as follows:

"That which will, I hope, render this present dear to you is the portrait of a woman who adores you. Our friend had two of them, but the great friendship he entertains towards you has given him the happy idea of disposing of one in your favour. This box contains two portraits of me, which are to be seen in two different ways; if you take off the bottom part of the case in its length, you will see me as a nun, if you press on the corner, the top will open and expose me to your sight in a state of nature. It is not possible, dearest, that a woman can ever have loved you as I do; our friend excites my passion by the flattering opinion he entertains of you. I cannot decide whether I am more fortunate in my friend or in my lover, for I could not imagine any being superior to either one or the other."

The case contained a gold snuffbox, and a small quantity of Spanish snuff which had been left in it proved that it had been used. I followed the instructions given in the letter, and I first saw my mistress in the costume of a nun, standing in half-profile. The second secret spring brought her before my eyes, entirely naked, lying on a mattress of black satin, in the position of the *Madeleine* of Correggio. She was looking at Love, who had the quiver at his feet and was gracefully sitting on the nun's robes. It was such a beautiful present that I did not think myself worthy of it. I wrote to M— M— a letter in which the deepest gratitude was blended with the most exalted love. The drawers of the bureau contained all her diamonds and four purses full of sequins. I admired her noble confidence in me; I locked the bureau, leaving everything undisturbed, and returned to Venice. If I had been able to escape out of the capricious clutches of Fortune by giving up gambling, my happiness would have been complete.

My own portrait was set with rare perfection, and, as it was arranged to be worn round the neck, I attached it to six yards of Venetian chain, which made it a very handsome present. The secret was in the ring to which it was suspended, and was very difficult to discover; to make the spring work and expose my likeness, it was necessary to pull the ring with some force and in a peculiar manner. Otherwise, nothing

could be seen but *The Annunciation*, and it was then a beautiful ornament for a nun.

On Twelfth Night, having the locket and chain in my pocket, I went early in the evening to watch near the fine statue erected to the hero Colleoni after he had been poisoned, if history does not deceive us. *Sit divus, modo non vivus*, is a sentence from the enlightened monarch which will last as long as there are monarchs on earth.

At six o'clock precisely my mistress alighted from the gondola, well dressed and well masked but this time in the garb of a woman. We went to the St. Samuel Opera and after the second ballet repaired to the *ridotto*, where she amused herself by looking at all the ladies of the nobility, who alone had the right to walk about without masks. After rambling about for half an hour, we entered the hall where the bank was held. She stopped before the table of M. Mocenigo, who at that time was the best amongst all the noble gamblers. As nobody was playing, he was carelessly whispering to a masked lady, whom I recognised as Madame Marina Pitani, whose adorer he was.

M— M— inquired whether I wanted to play, and, as I answered in the negative, she said to me, "I take you for my partner."

And, without waiting for my answer, she drew out a purse and placed a pile of gold on a card. The banker, without disturbing himself, shuffled the cards, turned them up, and my friend won the *paroli*. The banker paid, took another pack of cards and continued his conversation with his lady, showing complete indifference to four hundred sequins which my friend had already placed on the same card. The banker continuing his conversation, M— M— said to me in excellent French, "Our stakes are not high enough to interest this gentleman; let us go."

I took up the gold, which I put in my pocket without answering M. de Mocenigo, who said to me, "Your mask is too exacting."

I rejoined my lovely gambler, who was surrounded. We stopped soon afterwards before the bank of M. Pierre Marcello, a charming young man, who had near him Madame Vénier, sister of the patrician Momolo. My mistress began to play and lost five rouleaux of gold, one after the other. Having no more money, she took handfuls of gold from my pocket and in four or five deals broke the bank. She went away, and the noble banker, bowing, complimented her upon her good fortune. After I had taken care of all the gold she had won, I gave her my arm, and we left the *ridotto*; but, remarking that a few inquisitive persons were following us, I took a gondola, which landed up according to my instructions. One can always escape prying eyes in this way in Venice.

After supper I counted our winnings and found myself in possession of one thousand sequins as my share. I rolled the remainder in paper, and my friend asked me to put it in her bureau. I then took my locket and threw it over her neck; it gave her the greatest delight, and she tried for a long time to discover the secret; at last I showed it her, and she pronounced my portrait an excellent likeness.

Recollecting that we had but three hours to devote to the pleasures

of love, I entreated her to allow me to turn them to good account.

"Yes," she said, "but be prudent, for our friend maintains that you might die on the spot."

"And why does he not fear the same danger for you, when your ecstasies are in reality much more frequent than mine?"

"He says that the liquor distilled by us women does not come from the brain, as is the case with men, and that the generating parts of woman have no connection with her intellect. The consequence of it, he says, is that the child is not the offspring of the mother as far as the brain, the seat of reason, is concerned, but of the father; and it seems to me very true. In that important act the woman has scarcely the amount of reason that she is in need of, and she cannot have any left to enable her to give a dose to the being she is generating."

"Your friend is a very learned man. But do you know that such a way of arguing opens my eyes singularly? It is evident that, if that system be true, women ought to be forgiven for all the follies which they commit on account of love, whilst man is inexcusable, and I should be in despair if I happened to place you in a position to become a mother."

"I shall know before long, and, if it should be the case, so much the better. My mind is made up, and my decision taken."

"And what is that decision?"

"To abandon my destiny entirely to you both; I am quite certain that neither one nor the other would let me remain at the convent."

"It would be a fatal event which would decide our future destinies. I would carry you off and take you to England to marry you."

"My friend thinks that a physician might be bought, who, under the pretext of some disease of his own invention, would prescribe that I go somewhere to drink the waters—a permission which the bishop might grant. At the watering place I would get 'cured' and come back here; but I would much rather unite our destinies forever. Tell me, dearest, could you manage to live anywhere as comfortably as you do here?"

"Alas! my love, no; but with you how could I be unhappy? But we will resume that subject whenever it may be necessary. Let us go to bed."

"Very well. If I have a son, my friend wishes to act towards him as a father."

"Would he believe himself to be the father?"

"You might both of you believe it; but some likeness would soon enlighten me as to which of you two was the true father."

"Yes. If, for instance, the child composed poetry, then you would suppose that he was the son of your friend?"

"How do you know that my friend can write poetry?"

"Admit that he is the author of the six lines which you wrote in answer to mine."

"I cannot possibly admit such a falsehood because, good or bad, they

were of my own making, and, so as to leave you no doubt, let me convince you of it at once."

"Oh, never mind! I believe you, and let us go to bed, or Love will challenge the god of Parnassus to a duel."

"Let him do it, but take this pencil and write; I am Apollo, you may be Love:

Je ne me battraï pas; je te cède la place.

Si Vénus est ma sœur, l'Amour est de ma race.

Je sais faire des vers. Un instant de perdu

N'offense point l'Amour si je l'ai convaincu."

"It is on my knees that I entreat your pardon, my heavenly friend; but how could I expect so much talent in a young daughter of Venice, only twenty-two years of age and, above all, brought up in a convent?"

"I have a most insatiate desire to prove myself more and more worthy of you. Did you think I was prudent at the gaming-table?"

"Prudent enough to make the most intrepid banker tremble."

"I do not always play so well; but I had taken you as a partner and felt I could set Fortune at defiance. Why would you not play?"

"Because I lost four thousand sequins last week and I was without money, but I shall play to-morrow, and Fortune will smile upon me. In the meantime, here is a small book which I brought from your boudoir—the postures of Pietro Aretino; I want to try all of them."

"The thought is worthy of you; but some of these positions could not be executed, and others are insipid."

"True; but I have chosen four very interesting ones."

These delightful labours occupied the remainder of the night until the alarum warned us that it was time to part. I accompanied my lovely nun as far as her gondola and then went to bed, but I could not sleep. I got up in order to go and pay a few small debts, for one of the greatest pleasures that a spendthrift can enjoy is, in my opinion, to discharge certain liabilities. The gold won by my mistress proved lucky for me, for I did not pass a single day of the carnival without winning.

Three days after Twelfth Night, having paid a visit to the casino of Muran for the purpose of placing some gold in M— M—'s bureau, the doorkeeper handed me a letter from my nun. Laura had, a few minutes before, delivered me one from C— C—.

My new mistress, after giving me an account of her health, requested me to inquire from my jeweller whether he had not by chance made a ring having on its bezel a St. Catherine which, without a doubt, concealed another portrait; she wished to know the secret of that ring. "A young boarder," she added, "a lovely girl and my friend, is the owner of that ring. There must be a secret, but she does not know it." I answered that I would do what she wished. But here is C— C—'s letter. It was rather amusing because it placed me in a regular dilemma; it bore a recent date, but M— M—'s letter had been written two days before it.

"Ah! how truly happy I am, my beloved husband! You love Sister

M— M—, my dear friend. She has a locket as big as a ring, and she cannot have received it from anyone but you; I am certain that your dear likeness is to be found under the 'Annunciation'; I recognised the style of the artist, and it is certainly the same who painted the locket and my ring. I am satisfied that Sister M— M— received that present from you. I am so pleased to know all that I would not run the risk of grieving her by telling her I knew her secret, but, my dear friend, either more open or more curious, has not imitated my reserve. She told me that she had no doubt of my St. Catherine concealing the portrait of my lover. Unable to say anything better, I told her that the ring was in reality a gift from my lover, but that I had no idea of his portrait being concealed inside of it. 'If it is as you say,' observed M— M—, 'and if you have no objection, I will try to find out the secret, and afterwards I will let you know mine.' Being quite certain that she would not discover it, I gave her my ring, saying that, if she could find out the secret, I should be very much pleased.

"Just at that moment my aunt paid me a visit, and I left my ring in the hands of M— M—, who returned it to me after dinner, assuring me that, although she had not been able to find out the secret, she was certain there was one. I promise you that she shall never hear anything about it from me because, if she saw your portrait, she would guess everything and then I should have to tell her who you are. I am sorry to be compelled to conceal anything from her, but I am very glad you love another. I pity you both with all my heart because I know you are obliged to make love through a grating in that horrid parlour. How I wish, dearest, I could give you my place! I would make two persons happy at the same time! Adieu!"

I answered that she had guessed rightly, that her friend's locket was a present from me and contained my likeness, but that she was to keep the secret, and to be certain that my friendship for M— M— interfered in no way with the feeling which bound me to her forever. I certainly was well aware that I was not behaving in a straightforward manner, but I endeavoured to deceive myself, so true it is that a woman, weak as she is, has more influence by the feeling she inspires than man can possibly have with all his strength. At all events, I was foolishly trying to keep up an intrigue which I knew to be near its *dénouement* through the intimacy that had sprung up between these two friendly rivals.

Laura having informed me that there was to be on a certain day a ball in the large parlour of the convent, I made up my mind to attend it in such a disguise that my two friends could not recognise me. I decided upon the costume of a Pierrot, because it conceals the form and the gait better than any other. I was certain that my two friends would be behind the grating and that it would afford me the pleasant opportunity of seeing them together and comparing them.

In Venice during the carnival that innocent pleasure is allowed in convents. The guests dance in the parlour, and the sisters remain behind the grating, enjoying the sight of the ball, which is over by sunset.

Then all the guests retire, and the poor nuns are for a long time happy in the recollection of the pleasure enjoyed by their eyes. The ball was to take place in the afternoon of the day appointed for my meeting with M— M— in the evening at the casino of Muran, but that could not prevent me from going to the ball; besides, I wanted to see my dear C— C—.

I have already said that the dress of a Pierrot is the costume which disguises the figure and the gait most completely; it has also the advantage, through a large cap, of concealing the hair, and the white gauze which covers the face does not allow the colour of the eyes or eyebrows to be seen; but, in order to prevent the costume from hindering the movements of the mask, he must not wear anything underneath, and in winter a dress made of light calico is not particularly agreeable. I did not, however, pay any attention to that, and, taking only a plate of soup, I went to Muran in a gondola. I had no cloak, and in my pockets I had nothing but my handkerchief, my purse and the key of the casino.

I went at once to the convent; the parlour was full; but, thanks to my costume of Pierrot, which was seen in Venice but seldom, everybody made room for me. I walked on, assuming the gait of a booby, the true characteristic of my costume, and I stopped near the dancers. After I had examined the Pantaloons, Punches, Harlequins and Merry Andrews, I went near the grating, where I saw all the nuns and boarders, some seated, some standing, and, without appearing to notice any of them in particular, I remarked my two friends together, and very intent upon the dancers. I then walked around the room, eyeing everybody from head to foot and calling general attention upon myself.

I chose for my partner in the minuet a pretty girl dressed as a Columbine and took her hand in so awkward a manner and with such an air of stupidity that everybody laughed and made room for us. My partner danced very well according to her costume, and I kept my character with such perfection that the laughter was general. After the minuet I danced twelve forlanas with the greatest vigour. Out of breath, I threw myself on a sofa, pretending to go to sleep, and the moment I began to snore everybody respected the slumbers of Pierrot. The quadrille lasted one hour, and I took no part in it; but immediately after it a Harlequin approached me with the impertinence which belongs to his costume and flogged me with his wand. It is Harlequin's weapon. In my quality of Pierrot I had no weapons; I seized him round the waist and carried him round the parlour, running all the time, while he kept on flogging me. I then put him down. Adroitly snatching his wand out of his hand, I lifted his Columbine on my shoulders and pursued him, striking him with the wand, to the great delight and mirth of the company. The Columbine was screaming because she was afraid of my tumbling down and of showing her centre of gravity to everybody in the fall. She had good reason to fear, for suddenly a foolish Merry Andrew came behind me, tripped me up, and down I tumbled. Everybody hooted Master Punch. I quickly picked myself up and, rather

vexed, began a regular fight with the insolent fellow. He was of my size but awkward, and he had nothing but strength; I threw him and, shaking him vigorously on all sides, contrived to deprive him of his hump and false stomach. The nuns, who had never seen such a merry sight, clapped their hands, everybody laughed loudly, and, improving my opportunity, I ran through the crowd and disappeared.

I was in a perspiration, and the weather was cold; I threw myself into a gondola and, in order not to get chilled, landed at the *ridotto*. I had two hours to spare before going to the casino of Muran, and I longed to enjoy the astonishment of my beautiful nun when she saw M. Pierrot standing before her. I spent those two hours in playing at all the banks, winning, losing and performing all sorts of antics with complete freedom, being satisfied that no one could recognise me, enjoying the present, bidding defiance to the future and laughing at all those reasonable beings who exercise their reason to avoid the misfortunes which they fear, destroying at the same time the pleasure that they might enjoy.

But two o'clock struck and gave me warning that Love and Comus were calling me, to bestow new delights upon me. With my pockets full of gold and silver, I left the *ridotto*, hurried to Muran, entered the sanctuary and saw my divinity leaning against the mantelpiece. She wore her convent dress; I came near her by stealth in order to enjoy her surprise; I look at her and stand petrified, astounded.

The person I see is not M— M—.

It is C— C—, dressed as a nun, who, more astonished even than myself does not utter one word or make a movement. I throw myself into an armchair in order to breathe and recover from my surprise. The sight of C— C— had annihilated me, and my mind was as much stupefied as my body; I found myself in an inextricable maze.

It is M— M—, I said to myself, who has played this trick on me, but how has she contrived to know that I am C— C—'s lover? Has C— C— betrayed my secret? But, if she has betrayed it, how could M— M— deprive herself of the pleasure of seeing me and consent to her place being taken by her friend and rival? That cannot be a mark of kind compliance, for a woman never carries it to such an extreme. I see in it only a mark of contempt, a gratuitous insult.

My self-love tried hard to imagine some reason likely to disprove the possibility of that contempt, but in vain. Absorbed in that dark discontent, I believed myself wantonly trifled with, deceived, despised, and I spent half an hour silent and gloomy, staring at C— C—, who scarcely dared to breathe, perplexed, confused and not knowing in whose presence she was; for she could know me only as the Pierrot whom she had seen at the ball.

Deeply in love with M— M— and having come to the casino only for her, I did not feel disposed to accept the exchange, although I was very far from despising C— C—, whose charms were as great, at least, as those of M— M—. I loved her tenderly, I adored her, but at that moment it was not she I wanted because at the very first her presence

had struck me as a practical joke. It seemed to me that, if I celebrated the return of C— C— in an amorous manner, I would fail in what I owed to myself, and I thought that I was bound in honour not to lend myself to the imposition. Besides, without exactly realising that feeling, I was not sorry to have it in my power to reproach M— M— with an indifference very strange in a woman in love, and I wanted to act in such a manner that she should not be able to say she had procured me a pleasure. I must add that I suspected M— M— to be hiding in the secret closet, perhaps with her friend.

I had to make a decision, for I could not pass the whole night in my costume of Pierrot and without speaking. At first I thought of going away, the more so since neither C— C— nor her friend could be certain that I and Pierrot were the same individual; but I soon abandoned the idea with horror, thinking of the deep sorrow which would fill the loving soul of C— C— if she ever heard I was the Pierrot. I almost fancied she knew it already, and I shared the grief which she evidently would feel in that case. I had seduced her; I had given her the right to call me her husband. These thoughts broke my heart.

"If M— M— is in the closet," said I to myself, "she will show herself in good time." With that idea, I took off the gauze which covered my features. My lovely C— C— gave a deep sigh and said:

"I breathe again! It could not be anyone but you; my heart felt it. You seemed surprised when you saw me, dearest; did you not know I was waiting for you?"

"I had not the faintest idea of it."

"If you are angry, I regret it deeply; but I am innocent."

"My adored friend, come to my arms and never suppose that I can be angry with you. I am delighted to see you; you are always my dear wife: but I entreat you to clear up a cruel doubt, for you could never have betrayed my secret."

"I! I would never have been guilty of such a thing, even if death had stared me in the face."

"Then how did you come here? How did your friend contrive to discover everything? No one but you could tell her that I am your husband. Laura perhaps . . ."

"No, Laura is faithful, dearest, and I cannot guess how it was."

"But how could you be persuaded to assume that disguise and come here? You can leave the convent, and you have never apprised me of that important circumstance!"

"Can you suppose I would not have told you all about it if I had ever left the convent, even once? I came out two hours ago for the first time; and I was induced to take that step in the simplest, the most natural manner."

"Tell me all about it, my love; I feel extremely curious."

"I am glad of it, and I would conceal nothing from you. You know how dearly M— M— and I love each other. No intimacy could be more tender than ours; you can judge of it by what I told you in

my letters. Well, two days ago my dear friend begged the abbess and my aunt to allow me to sleep in her room in the place of the lay sister, who, having a very bad cold, had gone with her cough to the infirmary. The permission was granted, and you cannot imagine our pleasure in seeing ourselves at liberty for the first time to sleep in the same bed. To-day, shortly after you had left the parlour, where you so much amused us without our discovering that the delightful Pierrot was our friend, my dear M— M— retired to her room and I followed her. The moment we were alone, she told me she wanted me to render her a service upon which depended our happiness. I need not tell you how readily I answered that she had only to name it. Then she opened a drawer and, much to my surprise, dressed me in this costume. She was laughing, and I did the same, without suspecting the end of the joke. When she saw me entirely metamorphosed into a nun, she told me she was going to trust me with a great secret, but that she entertained no fear of my discretion. 'Let me tell you, dearest friend,' she said to me, 'that I was on the point of going out of the convent, not to return till to-morrow morning. I have, however, just decided that you shall go instead. You have nothing to fear and you do not require any instructions because I know that you will meet with no difficulty. In an hour a lay sister will come here, I will speak a few words aside to her, and she will tell you to follow her. You will go out with her through the small gate and across the garden as far as the room leading out to the low shore. There you will get into the gondola and say to the gondolier these words: "To the casino." You will reach it in five minutes; you will step out and enter a small apartment, where you will find a good fire; you will be alone, and you will wait.' 'For whom?' I inquired. 'For nobody. You need not know any more; you may only be certain that nothing unpleasant will happen to you; trust me for that. You will sup at the casino and sleep if you like, without being disturbed. Do not ask any questions, for I cannot answer them.' Such is, my dear husband, the whole truth. Tell me now what I could do after that speech of my friend and after she had received my promise to do whatever she wished. Do not mistrust what I tell you, for my lips cannot utter a falsehood. I laughed and, not expecting anything else but an agreeable adventure, followed the lay sister and soon found myself here. After a tedious hour of waiting, Pierrot made his appearance. Be quite certain that, the very moment I saw you, my heart knew who it was; but a minute after I felt as if the lightning had struck me when I saw you step back, for I saw clearly enough that you did not expect to find me. Your gloomy silence frightened me, and I would never have dared to be the first in breaking it—the more so as, in spite of the feelings of my heart, I might have been mistaken. The dress of Pierrot might conceal some other man, but certainly no one that I could have seen in this place without horror. Recollect that for the last eight months I have been deprived of the happiness of kissing you; and, now that you must be certain of my innocence, allow me to congratulate you

upon knowing this casino. You are happy, and I congratulate you with all my heart. M— M— is, after me, the only woman worthy of your love, the only one with whom I could consent to share it. I used to pity you, but I do so no longer, and your happiness makes me happy. Kiss me now.”

I should have been very ungrateful, I should even have been cruel if I had not then folded in my arms with the warmth of true love the angel of goodness and beauty who was before me, thanks to the most wonderful effort of friendship.

After assuring her that I no longer entertained any doubt of her innocence, I told her that I thought the behaviour of her friend very ambiguous. I said that, notwithstanding the pleasure I felt in seeing her, the trick played upon me by her friend was a very bad one, that it could not do otherwise than displease me greatly because it was an insult to me.

“I am not of your opinion,” replied C— C—. “My dear M— M— has evidently contrived somehow or other to discover that, before you were acquainted with her, you were my lover. She thought very likely that you still loved me; and she imagined (for I know her well) that she could not give us a greater proof of her love than by procuring us, without forewarning, that which two lovers fond of each other must wish for so ardently. She wished to make us happy, and I cannot be angry with her for it.”

“You are right to think so, dearest, but my position is very different from yours. You have not another lover; you could not have another; but I, being free and unable to see you, have not found it possible to resist the charms of M— M—. I love her madly; she knows it, and, intelligent as she is, she must have meant to show her contempt for me by doing what she has done. I candidly confess that I feel hurt in the highest degree. If she loved me as I love her, she never could have sent you here instead of coming herself.”

“I do not think so, my beloved friend. Her soul is as noble as her heart is generous; and just in the same manner that I am not sorry to know that you love one another and that you make each other happy—as this beautiful casino proves to me—she does not regret our love, and she is, on the contrary, delighted to show us that she approves of it. Most likely she meant to prove that she loved you for your own sake, that your happiness makes her happy and that she is not jealous of her best friend being her rival. To convince you that you ought not to be angry with her for having discovered our secret, she proves, by sending me here in her place, that she is pleased to see your heart divided between her and me. You know very well that she loves me and that I am often either her wife or her husband, and, as you do not object to my being your rival and making her often as happy as I can, she does not want you either to suppose that her love is like hatred, for the love of a jealous heart is very much like it.”

“You plead the cause of your friend with the eloquence of an

angel; but, dear little wife, you do not see the affair in its proper light. You have intelligence and a pure soul, but you have not my experience. M— M—'s love for me has been nothing but a passing fancy, and she knows that I am not such an idiot as to be deceived by all this affair. I am miserable, and it is her doing."

"Then I should be right if I complained of her also, because she makes me feel that she is my lover's mistress, and she shows me that, after seducing him from me, she gives him back to me without difficulty. Then she wishes me to understand that she despises also my tender affection for her, since she places me in a position to show that affection for another person."

"Now, dearest, you speak without reason, for the relations between you two are of an entirely different nature. Your mutual love is nothing but trifling nonsense, a mere illusion of the senses. The pleasures which you enjoy together are not exclusive. To become jealous of one another, it would be necessary that one of you two should feel a similar affection for another woman, but M— M— could no more be angry at your having a lover than you could be so yourself if she had one—provided, however, the lover did not belong to the other."

"But that is precisely our case, and you are mistaken. We are not angry at your loving us both equally. Have I not written to you that I would most willingly give you my place near M— M—? Then you must believe that I despise you likewise?"

"My darling, that wish of yours to give me up your place, when you did not know that I was happy with M— M—, arose from your friendship rather than from your love; and for the present I must be glad to see that your friendship is stronger than your love; but I have every reason to be sorry when M— M— feels the same. I love her without any possibility of marrying her—do you understand me, dearest? As for you, knowing that you are to be my wife, I am certain of our love, which practice will animate with new life. It is not the same with M— M—; that love cannot spring up again into existence. Is it not humiliating for me to have inspired her with nothing but a passing fancy? I understand your adoration for her very well. She has initiated you into all her mysteries, and you owe her eternal friendship and everlasting gratitude."

It was midnight, and we were continuing to waste our time in this desultory conversation when the prudent and careful servant brought us an excellent supper. I could not touch anything, my heart was too full; but my dear little wife supped with a good appetite. I could not help laughing when I saw a salad of whites of eggs, and C— C— thought it extraordinary because all the yolks had been removed. In her innocence she could not understand the intention of the person who had ordered the supper. As I looked at her, I was compelled to acknowledge that she had improved in beauty; in fact, she was remarkably beautiful, yet I remained cold by her side. I have always

thought that there is no merit in being faithful to the person we truly love.

Two hours before daylight we resumed our seats near the fire, and C— C—, seeing how dull I was, was delicately attentive to me. She attempted no allurements; all her movements wore the stamp of the most decent reserve, and her conversation, tender in its expressions and perfectly easy, never conveyed the shadow of a reproach for my coolness.

Towards the end of our long conversation she asked me what she should say to her friend on her return to the convent.

"My dear M— M— expects to see me full of joy and gratitude for the generous present she thought she was making me by giving me this night, but what shall I tell her?"

"The whole truth. Do not keep from her a single word of our conversation, as far as your memory will serve you, and tell her especially that she has made me miserable for a long time."

"No, for I should cause her too great a sorrow; she loves you dearly and cherishes the locket which contains your likeness. I mean, on the contrary, to do all I can to bring peace between you two; and I must succeed before long, because my friend is not guilty of any wrong, and you only feel some spite, although with no cause. I will send you my letter by Laura, unless you promise me to go and fetch it yourself at her house."

"Your letters will always be dear to me; but, mark my words, M— M— will not enter into any explanation. She will believe you in everything except one particular."

"I suppose you mean our passing a whole night together as innocently as if we were brother and sister. If she knows you as well as I do, she will indeed think it most wonderful."

"In that case you may tell her the contrary if you like."

"Nothing of the sort. I hate falsehoods and will certainly never utter one in such a case as this; it would be very wrong. I do not love you less on that account, my darling, although during this long night you have not condescended to give me the slightest proof of your love."

"Believe me, dearest, I am sick from unhappiness. I love you with my whole soul, but I am in such a situation that . . ."

"What! you are weeping, my love! Oh, I entreat you, spare my heart! I am so sorry to have told you such a thing, but I can assure you I never meant to make you unhappy. I am sure that in a quarter of an hour M— M— will be crying likewise."

The alarm struck, and, having no longer any hope of seeing M— M— come to justify herself I kissed C— C—. I gave her the key of the casino, requesting her to return it for me to M— M—, and, my young friend having gone back to the convent, I put on my mask and left the casino.

CHAPTER 43

THE weather was fearful. The wind was blowing fiercely, and it was bitterly cold. When I reached the shore, I looked for a gondola, I called the gondoliers; but, in contravention to the police regulations, there was neither gondola nor gondolier. What was I to do? Dressed in light linen, I was hardly in a fit state to walk along the wharf for an hour in such weather. I would most likely have gone back to the casino if I had had the key; but I was paying the penalty of the foolish spite which had made me give it up. The wind almost carried me off my feet, and there was no house that I could enter to get shelter.

I had in my pockets three hundred philippes that I had won in the evening and a purse full of gold. I had therefore every reason to fear the thieves of Muran, a very dangerous class of cut-throats, determined murderers who enjoyed and abused a certain impunity because they had some privileges granted to them by the government on account of the services they rendered in the manufactories of looking-glasses and in the glass-works which are numerous on the island. In order to prevent their emigration, the government had granted them the freedom of Venice. I dreaded meeting a pair of them, who would at least strip me of everything; I had not, by chance, with me the knife which all honest men must carry to defend their lives in my dear country. I was in an unpleasant predicament. I was thus painfully situated when I thought I could see a light through the crevices of a small house. I knocked modestly against the shutter. A voice called out, "Who is knocking?" And at the same moment the shutter was pushed open. "What do you want?" asked a man, rather astonished at my costume.

I explained my predicament in a few words and, giving him one sequin, begged his permission to shelter myself under his roof. Convinced by my sequin rather than my words, he opened the door, I went in, and, promising him another sequin for his trouble, I requested him to get me a gondola to take me to Venice. He dressed hurriedly, thanking God for that piece of good fortune, and went out assuring me that he would soon get me a gondola. I remained alone in a miserable room, in which all his family, sleeping together in a large, ill-looking bed, were staring at me in consequence of my extraordinary costume. In half an hour the good man returned to announce that the gondoliers were at the wharf, but that they wanted to be paid in advance. I raised no objection, gave a sequin to the man for his trouble and went to the wharf.

The sight of two strong gondoliers made me get into the gondola without anxiety, and we left the shore without being much disturbed by the wind; but, when we had gone beyond the island, the storm attacked us with such fury that I thought myself lost, for, although a good swimmer, I was not sure I had strength enough to resist the violence of the waves and swim to the shore. I ordered the men

to go back to the island, but they answered that I had not to deal with a couple of cowards and that I had no occasion to be afraid. I knew the disposition of our gondoliers and made up my mind to say no more.

But the wind increased in violence, the foaming waves rushed into the gondola, and my two rowers, in spite of their vigour and courage, could no longer guide it. We were within only one hundred yards of the mouth of the Jesuits' Canal when a terrible gust of wind threw one of the *barcarols* into the sea; most fortunately he contrived to hold to the gondola and get in again, but he had lost his oar, and, while he was securing another the gondola had tacked, and already gone a considerable distance abreast. The position called for immediate decision, and I had no wish to take my supper with Neptune. I threw a handful of philippes into the gondola and ordered the gondoliers to throw overboard the *jelce* which covered the boat. The ringing of money, as much as the imminent danger, ensured instant obedience, and then, the wind having less hold upon us, my brave boatmen showed Æolus that their efforts could conquer him, for in less than five minutes we shot into the Beggars' Canal and I reached the Bragadin Palace. I went to bed at once, covering myself heavily in order to regain my natural heat, but sleep, which alone could have restored me to health, would not visit me.

Five or six hours afterwards M. de Bragadin and his two inseparable friends paid me a visit and found me raving with fever. That did not prevent my respectable protector from laughing at the sight of the Pierrot costume lying on the sofa. After congratulating me upon having escaped with my life out of such a bad predicament, they left me alone. In the evening I perspired so profusely that my bed had to be changed. The next day my fever and delirium increased, and two days after, the fever having abated, I found myself almost crippled and suffering fearfully with lumbago. I felt that nothing could relieve me but a strict regimen, and I bore the evil patiently.

Early on the Wednesday morning Laura, the faithful messenger, called on me; I was still in my bed; I told her that I could neither read nor write and asked her to come again the next day. She placed on the table near my bed the parcel she had for me and left me, knowing what had occurred to me sufficiently to enable her to inform C— C— of the state I was in.

Feeling a little better towards the evening, I ordered my servant to lock me in my room, and I opened C— C—'s letter. The first thing I found in the parcel, and which caused me great pleasure, was the key of the casino, which she returned to me; I had already repented having given it up and was beginning to feel that I had been in the wrong. It acted like a refreshing balm upon me. The second thing, not less dear after the return of the precious key, was a letter from M— M—, the seal of which I was not long in breaking, and I read the following lines:

"The particulars which you have read or which you are going to

read in my friend's letter will cause you, I hope, to forget the fault which I committed so innocently; for I trusted, on the contrary, that you would be very happy. I saw all and heard all, and you would not have gone away without the key if I had not most unfortunately fallen asleep an hour before your departure. Take back the key and come to the casino to-morrow night, since Heaven has saved you from the storm. Your love may, perhaps, give you the right to complain, but not to ill-treat a woman who certainly has not given you any mark of contempt."

I afterwards read the letter of my dear C— C—, and I will give a copy of it here, because I think it will prove interesting:

"I entreat you, dear husband, not to send back this key if you have not become the most cruel of men, unless you find pleasure in tormenting two women who love you ardently and for yourself only. Knowing your excellent heart, I trust you will go to the casino to-morrow evening and make it up with M— M—, who cannot go there to-night. You will see that you are in the wrong, dearest, and that, far from despising you, my dear friend loves you only. In the meantime, let me tell you what you are not acquainted with and what you must be anxious to know.

"Immediately after you had gone away in that fearful storm, which caused me such anguish, and just as I was preparing to return to the convent, I was much surprised to see standing before me my dear M— M—, who from some hiding-place had heard all you had said. She had several times been on the point of showing herself, but had always been prevented by fear of coming out of season and thus stopping a reconciliation which she thought was inevitable between two fond lovers. Unfortunately sleep conquered her before your departure, and she woke only when the alarum struck, too late to detain you, for you had rushed away with the hate of a man who is flying from some terrible danger. As soon as I saw her, I gave her the key, although I did not know what it meant, and my friend, heaving a deep sigh, told me she would explain everything as soon as we were safe in her room. We left the casino in a dreadful storm, trembling for your safety and not thinking of our own danger. As soon as we were in the convent, I resumed my usual costume, and M— M— went to bed. I took a seat near her, and this is what she told me:

"When you left your ring in my hands to go to your aunt, who had sent for you, I examined it with so much attention that at last I suspected the small blue spot to be connected with the secret spring; I took a pin, succeeded in removing the top part, and I cannot express the joy I felt when I saw that we both loved the same man; but no more can I give you an idea of my sorrow when I thought that I was encroaching upon your rights. Delighted, however, with my discovery, I immediately conceived a plan which would procure you the pleasure of supping with him. I closed the ring again and returned it to you, telling you at the same time that I had not been able to discover anything. I was then truly the happiest of women. Knowing your heart, knowing that you were aware of the love of your lover for me, since I

had innocently shown you his portrait, and happy in the idea that you were not jealous of me, I would have despised myself if I had entertained any feelings different from your own, the more so as your rights over him were by far stronger than mine. As for the mysterious manner in which you had always kept from me the name of your husband, I easily guessed that you were only obeying his orders, and I admired your noble sentiments and the goodness of your heart. In my opinion your lover was afraid of losing us both if we found out that neither the one nor the other of us possessed his whole heart. I could not express my deep sorrow when I thought that, after you had seen me in possession of his portrait, you continued to act in the same manner towards me, although you could not any longer hope to be the sole object of his love. Then I had but one idea: to prove to both of you that M— M— is worthy of your affection, your friendship, your esteem. I was indeed thoroughly happy when I thought that the felicity of our trio would be increased a hundredfold, for is it not an unbearable misery to keep a secret from the being we adore? I made you take my place, and I thought that proceeding a masterpiece. You allowed me to dress you as a nun, and, with a compliance which proved your confidence in me, you went to my casino without knowing where you were going. As soon as you had landed, the gondola came back, and I went to a place well known to our friend, from which, without being seen, I could follow all your movements and hear everything you said. I was the author of the play; it was natural that I should witness it, the more so as I felt certain of seeing and hearing nothing that would not be very agreeable to me. I reached the casino a quarter of an hour after you, and I cannot tell you my delightful surprise when I saw that dear Pierrot who had amused us so much and whom we had not recognised. But I was fated to feel no other pleasure than that of his first appearance. Fear, surprise and anxiety overwhelmed me at once when I saw the effect produced upon him by the disappointment of his expectation, and I felt unhappy. Our lover took the thing wrongly, and he went away in despair; he loves me still, but, if he thinks of me, it is only to try to forget me. Alas! he will succeed but too soon! By sending back that key, he proves that he will never again go to the casino. Fatal night! When my only wish was to minister to the happiness of three persons, how is it that the very reverse of my wish has occurred? It will kill me, dear friend, unless you contrive to make him listen to reason, for I feel that without him I cannot live. You must have the means of writing to him, you know him, you know his name. In the name of all goodness, send back this key to him with a letter to persuade him to come to the casino to-morrow or on the following day, if it is only to speak to me, and I hope to convince him of my love and my innocence. Rest to-day, dearest, but to-morrow write to him, tell him the whole truth; take pity on your poor friend and forgive her for loving your lover. I shall write a few lines myself; you will enclose them in your letter. It is my fault if he no longer loves you; you ought to hate me, and yet you are generous enough to love me. I adore you;

I have seen his tears, I have seen how well his soul can love; I know him now. I could not have believed that men were able to love so much. I have passed a terrible night. Do not think I am angry, dear friend, because you confided to him that we love one another like two lovers; it does not displease me, and with him it was no indiscretion, because his mind is as free of prejudices as his heart is good.'

"Tears were choking her. I tried to console her and most willingly promised her to write to you. She never closed her eyes throughout that day, but I slept soundly for four hours.

"When we got up, we found the convent full of bad news, which interested us a great deal more than people imagined. It was reported that an hour before daybreak a fishing-boat had been lost in the lagune, that two gondolas had been capsized and that the people in them had perished. You may imagine our anguish! We dared not ask any questions; but it was just the hour at which you had left me, and we entertained the darkest forebodings. We returned to our room, where M— M— fainted away. More courageous than she, I told her that you were a good swimmer; but I could not allay her anxiety, and she went to bed with a feverish chill. Just at that moment, my aunt, who is of a very cheerful disposition, came in, laughing, to tell us that during the storm the Pierrot who had made us laugh so much had had a narrow escape from being drowned. 'Ah! poor Pierrot!' I exclaimed, 'tell us all about him, dear aunt. I am very glad he was saved. Who is he? Do you know?' 'Oh! yes,' she answered, 'everything is known, for he was taken home by our gondoliers. One of them just told me that Pierrot, having spent the night at the Briati ball, did not find any gondola to return to Venice and our gondoliers took him for one sequin. One of the men fell into the sea; but then the brave Pierrot, throwing handfuls of silver upon the *zenia*, pitched the *felce* overboard, and, the wind having less hold, they reached Venice safely through the Beggars' Canal. This morning the lucky gondoliers divided thirty philippes which they found in the gondola, and they were fortunate enough to pick up their *felce*. Pierrot will remember Muran and the ball at Briati. The man says he is the son of M. de Bragadin, the procurator's brother. He was taken to the palace of that nobleman nearly dead from cold, for he was dressed in light calico and had no cloak.'

"When my aunt had left us, we looked at one another for several minutes without uttering a word, but we felt that the good news had brought back life to us. M— M— asked me whether you were really the son of M. de Bragadin. 'It might be so,' I said to her, 'but his name does not show my lover to be the bastard of that nobleman, and still less his legitimate child, for M. de Bragadin was never married.' 'I should be very sorry,' said M— M—, 'if he were his son.' I thought it right, then, to tell her your true name and of the application made to my father by M. de Bragadin for my hand, the consequence of which was that I had been shut up in the convent. Therefore, my own darling, your little wife has no longer any secret to keep from M— M—, and I hope you will not accuse me of indiscretion, for it is better that our

dear friend should know all the truth than only half of it. We were greatly amused, as you may well suppose, by the certainty with which people say that you spent all the night at the Briati ball. When people do not know everything, they invent, and what might be is often accepted in the place of what is in reality; sometimes it proves very fortunate. At all events, the news did a great deal of good to my friend, who is now much better. She has had an excellent night, and the hope of seeing you at the casino has restored all her beauty. She has read this letter three or four times and has smothered me with kisses. I long to give her the letter which you are going to write to her. The messenger will wait for it. Perhaps I shall see you again at the casino, and in a better temper, I hope. Adieu."

It did not require so much argument to conquer me. When I had finished the letter, I was at once the admirer of C— C— and the ardent lover of M—M—. But, alas! although the fever had left me, I was crippled. Certain that Laura would come again early the next morning, I could not refrain from writing to both of them—a short letter, it is true, but long enough to assure them that reason had again taken possession of my poor brain. I wrote to C— C— that she had done right in telling her friend my name, the more so that, as I did not attend their church any longer, I had no reason to make a mystery of it. In everything else I freely acknowledged myself in the wrong and promised her I would atone by giving M— M— the strongest possible proofs of my repentance as soon as I could go again to her casino.

This is the letter that I wrote to my adorable nun:

"I gave C— C— the key of your casino, to be returned to you, my own charming friend, because I believed myself trifled with and despised, of malice aforethought, by the woman I worship. In my error I thought myself unworthy of presenting myself before your eyes, and, in spite of love, horror made me shudder. Such was the effect produced upon me by an act which would have appeared to me admirable if my self-love had not blinded me and upset my reason. But, dearest, to admire it, it would have been necessary for my mind to be as noble as yours, and I have proved how far it is from being so. I am inferior to you in all things except passionate love, and I will prove it to you at our next meeting, when I will beg on my knees a generous pardon. Believe me, beloved creature, if I wish ardently to recover my health, it is only in order to have it in my power to prove by my love a thousand times increased how ashamed I am of my errors. My painful lumbago alone prevented me from answering your short note yesterday, to express to you my regrets and the love which has been enhanced in me by your generosity—alas, so badly rewarded! I can assure you that in the lagoon, with death staring me in the face, I regretted no one but you, nothing but having outraged you. But in the fearful danger then threatening me I saw only a punishment from Heaven. If I had not cruelly sent back to you the key of the casino, I should most likely have returned there and should have avoided the sorrow as well as the physical pains which I am now suffering as an expiation. I thank

you a thousand times for having recalled me to myself, and you may be certain that in future I shall keep better control over myself; nothing shall make me doubt your love. But, darling, what do you say of C— C—? Is she not an angel incarnate, who can be compared to no one but you? You love us both equally. I am the only one weak and faulty, and you make me ashamed of myself. Yet I feel that I would give my life for her as well as for you. I feel curious about one thing, but I cannot trust it to paper. You will satisfy that curiosity the first time I have the happiness to see you. I do not think I shall be able to go to the casino before eight days at the earliest. I will let you know two days beforehand. In the meantime, I entreat you to think a little of me and to be certain of my devoted love. Adieu!”

The next morning Laura found me sitting up in bed and in a fair way to recover my health. I requested her to tell C— C— that I felt much better; and I gave her the letter I had written. She had brought me one from my dear little wife, in which I found enclosed a note from M— M—. Those two letters were full of tender expressions of love, anxiety for my health and ardent prayers for my recovery.

Six days afterwards, feeling much stronger, I went to Muran, where the keeper of the casino handed me a letter from M— M—. She wrote me how impatient she was for my complete recovery and how desirous she was to see me in possession of her casino, with all the privileges, which she hoped I would retain forever.

“Let me know, I entreat you,” she added, “when we are likely to meet again, either at Muran or in Venice, as you please. Be quite certain that, whenever we meet, we shall be alone and without a witness.”

I answered at once, telling her that we would meet the day after the morrow at her casino because I wanted to receive her loving absolution in the very spot where I had outraged the most generous of women.

I was longing to see her again, for I was ashamed of my cruel injustice towards her and panting to atone for my wrongs. Knowing her disposition and reflecting calmly upon what had taken place, it was now evident to me that what she had done, very far from being a mark of contempt, was the refined effort of a love wholly devoted to me. Since she had found out that I was the lover of her young friend, could she imagine that my heart belonged only to herself? In the same way that her love for me did not prevent her from being compliant with the ambassador, she admitted the possibility of my being the same with C— C—. She overlooked the difference of constitution between the two sexes and the privileges enjoyed by women.

Now that age has whitened my hair and deadened the ardour of my senses, my imagination does not take such a high flight, and I think differently. I am conscious that my beautiful nun sinned against womanly reserve and modesty, the two most beautiful appanages of the fair sex; but, if that unique, or at least rare, woman was guilty of an eccentricity which I then thought a virtue, she was at all events exempt from that fearful venom called jealousy, an unhappy passion which devours the

miserable being who is labouring under it and destroys the love that gave it birth.

Two days afterwards, on the 4th of February, 1754, I had the supreme felicity of finding myself again alone with my beloved mistress. She wore the dress of a nun. As we both felt guilty, the moment we saw each other, by a spontaneous movement we both fell on our knees, folded in each other's arms. We had both ill-treated Love; she had treated him like a child, I had adored him after the fashion of a Jansenist. But where could we have found the proper language for the excuses we had to address to each other, for the mutual forgiveness we had to entreat and grant? Kisses, that mute, yet expressive language, that delicate, voluptuous contact which sends sentiment coursing rapidly through the veins, which expresses at the same time the feeling of the heart and the impressions of the mind—that language was the only one we had recourse to, and without having uttered one syllable, dear reader, oh, how well we agreed!

Both overwhelmed with emotion, longing to give one another some proofs of the sincerity of our reconciliation and of the ardent fire which was consuming us, we rose without unclasping our arms, and falling (a most amorous group!) on the nearest sofa, we remained there until the heaving of a deep sigh, which we would not have stopped, even if we had known that it was to be the last!

Thus was completed our happy reconciliation; and the calm infused into the soul by contentment having, so to speak, doubled our felicity, we both burst into a hearty laugh when we noticed that I had kept on my cloak and my mask. After we had enjoyed our mirth, I unmasked myself and asked her whether it was quite true that no one had witnessed our reconciliation.

She took up one of the candlesticks and, seizing my hand, "Come," she said. She led me to the other end of the room, before a large cupboard which I had already suspected of containing a secret. She opened it, and, when she had moved a sliding plank, I saw a door through which we entered a pretty closet furnished with everything necessary to a person wishing to pass a few hours there. Near the sofa was a sliding panel; M— M— removed it, and through twenty holes placed at a distance from each other I saw every part of the room in which nature and love had performed for our curious friend a play in six acts, during which I do not think he had occasion to be dissatisfied with the actors.

"Now," said M— M—, "I am going to satisfy the curiosity which you were prudent enough not to trust to paper."

"But you cannot guess . . ."

"Silence, dearest! Love would not be of divine origin did he not possess the faculty of divination. He knows all, and here is the proof. Do you not wish to know whether my friend was with me during the fatal night which has cost me so many tears?"

"You have guessed rightly."

"Well, then, he was with me, and you must not be angry, for you

then completed your conquest of him. He admired your character, your love, your sentiments, your honesty. He could not help expressing his astonishment at the rectitude of my instinct or his approval of the passion I felt for you. It was he who consoled me in the morning by assuring me that you would certainly come back to me as soon as you knew my real feelings, the loyalty of my intentions and my good faith."

"But you must often have fallen asleep; for, unless excited by some powerful interest, it is impossible to pass eight hours in darkness and in silence."

"We were moved by the deepest interest; besides, we were in darkness only when we kept these holes open. The plank was raised during our supper, and we listened in religious silence to your slightest whisper. The interest which kept my friend awake was perhaps greater than mine. He told me that he had never before had a better opportunity of studying the human heart and that you must have passed the most painful night. He truly pitied you. We were delighted with C— C—, for it is indeed wonderful that a young girl of fifteen should reason as she did to justify my conduct without any other weapons but those given her by nature and truth; she must have the soul of an angel. If you ever marry her, you will have the most heavenly wife. I shall of course feel miserable if I lose her, but your happiness will make amends for all. Do you know, dearest, that I cannot understand how you could fall in love with me after having known her, any more than I can conceive how she does not hate me ever since she has discovered that I have robbed her of your heart. My dear C— C— has truly something divine in her disposition. Do you know why she confided to you her barren loves with me? Because, as she told me herself, she wished to ease her conscience, thinking that she was in some measure unfaithful to you."

"Does she think herself bound to be entirely faithful to me, with the knowledge she has now of my own unfaithfulness?"

"She is particularly delicate and conscientious; and though she believes herself truly your wife, she does not think that she has any right to control your actions, but she believes herself bound to give you an account of all she does."

"Noble girl!"

The prudent wife of the doorkeeper having brought the supper, we sat down to the well supplied table. M— M— remarked that I had become much thinner.

"The pains of the body do not fatten a man," I said, "and the sufferings of the mind emaciate him. But we have suffered sufficiently, and we must be wise enough never to recall anything which can be painful to us."

"You are quite right, my love; the instants that man is compelled to give up to misfortune or to suffering are so many moments stolen from his life; but he doubles his existence when he has the talent of multiplying his pleasures, no matter of what nature they may be."

We amused ourselves in talking over past dangers, Pierrot's disguise

and the ball at Briati, where she had been told that another Pierrot had made his appearance.

M— M— wondered at the extraordinary effect of a disguise.

"For," said she to me, "the Pierrot in the parlour of the convent seemed to me taller and thinner than you. If chance had not made you take the convent gondola, if you had not had the strange idea of assuming the disguise of Pierrot, I should not have known who you were, for my friends in the convent would not have been interested in you. I was delighted when I heard that you were not a patrician, as I feared, because, had you been one, I might in time have run some great danger."

I knew very well what she had to fear, but, pretending complete ignorance, "I cannot conceive," I said, "what danger you might run on account of my being a patrician."

"My darling, I cannot speak to you openly unless you give me your word to do what I am going to ask you."

"How could I hesitate, my love, in doing anything to please you, provided my honour is not implicated? Have we not now everything in common? Speak, idol of my heart, tell me your reasons and rely upon my love; it is the guarantee of my ready compliance in everything that can give you pleasure."

"Very well. I want you to give a supper in your casino to me and my friend, who is dying to make your acquaintance."

"And I foresee that after supper you will leave me to go with him."

"You must feel that propriety compels me to do so."

"Your friend already knows, I suppose, who I am?"

"I thought it was right to tell him because, if I had not told him, he could not have entertained the hope of supping with you, and especially at your house."

"I understand; I guess your friend is one of the foreign ambassadors."

"Precisely."

"But may I hope that he will so far honour me as to throw off his *incognito*?"

"That is understood; I shall introduce him to you according to accepted forms, telling his name and his political position."

"Then it is all for the best, darling. How could you suppose I would have any objection to procuring you that pleasure, when, on the contrary, nothing could please me more? Name the day and be quite certain that I shall anxiously look for it."

"I should have been sure of your compliance if you had not given me cause to doubt it."

"That is a home-thrust, but I deserve it."

"And I hope it will not make you angry. Now I am happy. Our friend is M. de Bernis, the French ambassador. He will come masked, and, as soon as he shows his features, I shall present him to you. Recollect that you must treat him as my lover, but you must not appear to know that he is aware of our intimacy."

"I understand that very well, and you shall have every reason to be pleased with my urbanity. The idea of that supper is delightful to me, and I hope the reality will be as agreeable. You were quite right, my love, to dread my being a patrician; for in that case the State Inquisitors, who very often think of nothing but making a show of their zeal, would not have failed to meddle with us, and the mere idea of the possible consequences makes me shudder. I under The Leads—you dishonoured—the abbess—the convent! Good God! Yes, if you had told me what you thought, I would have given you my name, and I could have done so all the more easily since my reserve was caused only by the fear of being known and of C— C— being taken to another convent by her father. But can you appoint a day for the supper? I long to have it all arranged."

"To-day is the fourth; well, then, in four days."

"That will be the eighth?"

"Exactly so. We will go to your casino after the second ballet. Give me all necessary particulars to enable us to find the house without inquiring from anyone."

I sat down and wrote out the most exact directions to find the casino by either land or water. Delighted with the prospect of such a party of pleasure, I asked my mistress to go to bed; but I remarked to her that, being convalescent and having made a hearty supper, I should be very likely to pay my first homage to Morpheus. Yielding to the circumstances, she set the alarum for ten o'clock, and we went to bed in the alcove. As soon as we woke up, Love claimed our attention and he had no cause of complaint; but towards midnight we fell asleep, our lips fastened together, and we found ourselves in that position in the morning when we opened our eyes. Although there was no time to lose, we could not make up our minds to part without making one more offering to Venus.

I remained in the casino after the departure of my divinity and slept until noon. As soon as I had dressed, I returned to Venice, and my first care was to give notice to my cook, so that the supper of the eighth of February should be worthy of the guests and worthy of me.

CHAPTER 44

I FELT highly pleased with the supper party I had arranged with M— M—, and I ought to have been happy. Yet I was not so. Whence came the anxiety which was a torment to me? Whence? From my fatal habit of gambling. That passion was rooted in me; to live and to gamble were to me two identical things, and, as I could not hold the bank, I would go and punt at the *ridotto*, where I lost my memory morning and night. That state of things made me miserable. Perhaps someone will say to me, "Why did you play, when there was no need of it; when you were in want of nothing; when you had all the money you could wish to satisfy your fancies?"

That would be a troublesome question if I had not made it a law to tell the truth. Well, then, dear inquisitive reader, if I played with almost the certainty of losing, although no one, perhaps, felt more keenly than I the losses made in gambling, it is because I had in me the evil spirit of ostentation—of prodigality, even—and because my heart bled when I found myself compelled to spend any money that I had not won at the gaming-table. It is an ugly vice, dear reader, I do not deny it. However, all I can say is that during the four days previous to the supper I lost all the gold won for me by M— M—.

On the anxiously awaited day I went to my casino, where at the appointed hour M— M— came with her friend, whom she introduced to me as soon as he had taken off his mask.

"I had an ardent wish, sir," said M. de Bernis to me, "to renew acquaintance with you, since I heard from Madame that we had known each other in Paris."

With these words he looked at me attentively, as people will do when they are trying to recollect a person whom they have lost sight of. I then told him we had never spoken to one another and that he had not seen enough of me to recollect my features now.

"I had the honour," I added, "to dine with Your Excellency at M. de Mocenigo's house, but you talked all the time with Marshal Keith, the Prussian ambassador, and I was not fortunate enough to attract your attention. As you were on the point of leaving Paris to return to Venice, you went away almost immediately after dinner, and I have never had the honour of seeing you since that time."

"Now I recollect you," he answered, "and I remember asking whether you were not the secretary of the embassy. But from this day we shall not forget each other again, for the mysteries which unite us are of a nature likely to establish a lasting intimacy between us."

The amiable couple were not long before they felt thoroughly at ease, and we sat down to supper, of which, of course, I did the honours. The ambassador, a fine connoisseur in wines, found mine excellent and was delighted to hear that I had them from Count Algarotti, who was reputed as having the best cellar in Venice.

My supper was delicate and abundant, and my manners towards my handsome guests were those of a private individual receiving his sovereign and the latter's mistress. I saw that M— M— was charmed with the respect with which I treated her and with my conversation, which evidently interested the ambassador highly. The serious character of a first meeting did not prevent the utterance of witty jests, for in that respect M. de Bernis was a true Frenchman. I have travelled much, I have deeply studied men individually and in a body, but I have never met with true sociability except in Frenchmen; they alone know how to jest; and it is rare, delicate, refined jesting, which animates conversation and makes society charming.

During our delightful supper wit was never wanting, and the amiable M— M— led the conversation to the romantic combination which had given her occasion to know me. Naturally, she proceeded to speak of my

passion for C— C—, and she gave such an interesting description of that young girl that the ambassador listened with as much attention as if he had never seen the object of it. But that was his rôle, for he was not aware that I had been informed of his having witnessed from his hiding-place my silly interview with C— C—. He told M— M— that he would have been delighted if she had brought her young friend to sup with us.

"That would be running too great a risk," answered the cunning nun. "But, if you approve of it," she added, looking at me, "I can have you sup with her at my casino, for we sleep in the same room."

That offer surprised me much, but it was not the moment to show it, so I replied, "It is impossible, madame, to add anything to the pleasure of your society; yet I confess I should be pleased if you could contrive to do us that great favour."

"Well, I will think of it."

"But," observed the ambassador, "if I am to be one of the party, I think it would be right to apprise the young lady of it."

"It is not necessary, for I will write to her to agree to whatever Madame may propose to her. I will do so to-morrow."

I begged the ambassador to prepare himself with a good stock of indulgence for a girl of fifteen who had no experience of the world. In the course of the evening I related the history of *O-Morphi*, which greatly amused him. He entreated me to let him see her portrait. He informed me that she was still an inmate of the Parc aux Cerfs, where she continued to be the delight of Louis XV, to whom she had given a child. My guests left me after midnight, highly pleased, and I remained alone.

The next morning, faithful to the promise I had made to my beautiful nun, I wrote to C— C— without informing her that there would be a fourth person at the projected supper, and, having given my note to Laura, I repaired to Muran, where I found the following letter from M— M—:

"I could not sleep soundly, my love, if I did not ease my conscience of an unpleasant weight. Perhaps you approved of the *partie carée* with our young friend only out of politeness. Tell me the truth, dearest, for, should you not look forward to that meeting with pleasure, I can contrive to undo it without implicating you in any way; trust me for that. If, however, you have no objection to the party, it will take place as agreed. Believe me, I love your soul more than your heart—I mean, than your person. Adieu."

Her fear was very natural, but out of shamefacedness I did not like to retract. M— M— knew me well, and, as a skilful tactician, she attacked my weak side.

Here is my answer:

"I expected your letter, my best beloved, and you cannot doubt it; because, as you know me thoroughly, you must be aware that I know you as well. Yes, I know your mind because I have exposed to you all my weakness and irritability by my sophisms. I do penance for it, dear-

est, when I think that, having raised your suspicions, your tenderness for me must have been weakened. Forget my visions, I beg, and be quite certain that for the future my soul will be in unison with yours. The supper must take place, it will be a pleasure for me; but let me confess that, in accepting it, I showed myself more grateful than polite. C— C— is a novice, and I am not sorry to give her an opportunity of seeing the world. In what school could she learn better than yours? Therefore I recommend her to you, and you will please me much by continuing to show your care and friendship towards her and by increasing, if possible, the sum of your goodness. I fear that you may entice her to take the veil, and, if she did, I would never console myself. Your friend has quite captivated me; he is a superior man and truly charming."

Thus did I wittingly deprive myself of the power of drawing back; but I was able to realise the full force of the situation. I had no difficulty in guessing that the ambassador was in love with C— C— and that he had confessed as much to M— M—, who, not being in a position to object to it, was compelled to show herself compliant and assist him in everything that could render his passion successful. She could certainly not do anything without my consent, and she had evidently considered the affair too delicate to venture upon proposing the party point-blank to me. They had, no doubt, put their heads together, so that, by bringing the conversation on that subject, I should find myself compelled for the sake of politeness and perhaps of my inward feelings to fall into the snare. The ambassador, whose profession it was to carry on intrigues skilfully, had succeeded well, and I had taken the bait as he wished. There was nothing left for me but to put a good face on the matter, not only so as not to show myself a very silly being, but also in order not to prove myself shamefully ungrateful towards a man who had granted me unheard-of privileges. Nevertheless, the consequence of it all was likely to be some coolness in my feelings towards both my mistresses. M— M— had become conscious of this after she had returned to the convent and, wishing to screen herself from all responsibility, had lost no time in writing me that she would cause the projected supper to be abandoned in case I should disapprove of it; but she knew very well that I would not accept her offer. Self-love is a stronger passion even than jealousy; it does not allow a man who has some pretension to wit to show himself jealous, particularly towards a person who is not tainted by that base passion and has proved it.

The next day, having gone early to the casino, I found the ambassador already there, and he welcomed me in the most friendly manner. He told me that, if he had known me in Paris, he would have introduced me at the court, where I should certainly have made my fortune. Now, when I think of that, I say to myself, "That might have been the case, but of what good would it have been to me?" Perhaps I should have fallen a victim of the Revolution, like so many others. M. de Bernis himself would have been one of those victims if Fate had not allowed him to die in Rome in 1794. He died

there wealthy but unhappy, unless his feelings had undergone a complete change before his death, and I do not believe that.

I asked him whether he liked Venice, and he answered that he could not do otherwise than like that city, in which he enjoyed excellent health and in which, with plenty of money, life could be enjoyed better than anywhere else.

"But I do not expect," he added, "to be allowed to keep this embassy very long. Be kind enough to let that remain between us; I do not wish to make M— M— unhappy."

We were conversing in all confidence when M— M— arrived with her young friend, who showed her surprise at seeing another man with me; but I encouraged her by the most tender welcome, and she recovered all her composure when she saw the delight of the stranger at being answered by her in good French. It gave us both an opportunity of paying the warmest compliments to the mistress who had taught her so well.

C— C— was truly charming; her looks, bright and at the same time modest, seemed to say to me, "You must belong to me." I wished to see her shine before our friends, and I contrived to conquer a cowardly feeling of jealousy which, in spite of myself, was beginning to get hold of me. I took care to make her talk on such subjects as I knew to be familiar to her. I developed her natural intelligence and had the satisfaction of seeing her admired.

Applauded, flattered, animated by the satisfaction she could read in my eyes, C— C— appeared a prodigy to M. de Bernis; and—oh! what a contradiction of the human heart!—I was pleased, yet I trembled lest he should fall in love with her! What an enigma! I was intent myself upon a work which would have caused me to murder any man who dared to undertake it.

During the supper, which was worthy of a king, the ambassador treated C— C— with the most delicate attentions. Wit, cheerfulness, decent manners attended our delightful party and did not exclude the gaiety and merry jests with which a Frenchman knows how to season every conversation.

An observing critic who, without being acquainted with us, wished to guess whether love was present at our happy party might have suspected, perhaps, but he certainly could not have affirmed, that it was there. M— M— treated the ambassador as a friend. She showed no other feeling towards me than that of deep esteem, and she behaved to C— C— with the tender affection of a sister. M. de Bernis was kind, polite and amiable with M— M—, but he never ceased to take the greatest interest in every word uttered by C— C—, who played her part to perfection, because she had only to follow her own nature, and, that nature being beautiful, she could not fail to be most charming.

We had passed five delightful hours, and the ambassador seemed more pleased even than any of us. M— M— had the air of a person satisfied with her own work, and I was playing the part of an approving

spectator. C— C— looked highly pleased at having secured the general approbation, and there was, perhaps, a slight feeling of vanity in her, arising from the special attention which the ambassador had bestowed on her. She looked at me, smiling, and I could easily understand the language of her soul, by which she wished to tell me that she felt perfectly well the difference between the society in which she was then and that in which her brother had given us such a disgusting specimen of his depravity.

After midnight it was time to think of our departure, and M. de Bernis undertook all the complimentary part. Thanking M— M— for the most agreeable supper he had ever made in his life, he contrived to make her offer a repetition of it for two days afterwards, and he asked me, for the sake of appearance, whether I should not find as much delight in that second meeting as himself. Could he have any doubt of my answering affirmatively? I believe not, for I had placed myself under the necessity of being compliant. All being agreed, we parted company.

The next day, when I thought of that exemplary supper, I had no difficulty in guessing what the ultimate result would be. The ambassador owed his great fortune entirely to the fair sex, because he possessed to the highest degree the art of coddling love; and, as his nature was eminently voluptuous, he found his advantage in it because he knew how to call desires into existence and this procured him enjoyments worthy of his delicate taste. I saw that he was deeply in love with C— C—, and I was far from supposing him the man to be satisfied with looking at her lovely eyes. He certainly had some plan arranged, and M— M—, in spite of all her honesty, was the prime manager of it; I knew that she would carry it on with such delicate skill that I should not see any evidence of it. Although I did not feel disposed to show more compliance than was strictly just, I foresaw that in the end I should be the dupe, and my poor C— C— the victim, of a cunningly contrived trick. I could not make up my mind either to consent with a good grace or to throw obstacles in the way; and, believing my dear little wife incapable of abandoning herself to anything likely to displease me, I allowed myself to be taken off my guard and to rely upon the difficulty of seducing her. Stupid calculation! Self-love and shamefacedness prevented me from using my common sense. At all events, that intrigue kept me in a state of fever because I was afraid of its consequences, and yet curiosity mastered me to such an extent that I was longing for the result. I knew very well that a second edition of the supper did not imply that the same play would be performed a second time, and I foresaw that the changes would be strongly marked. But I thought myself bound in honour not to retract; I could not lead the intrigue; but I believed myself sufficiently skilful to baffle all their manœuverings.

After all those considerations, however, considerations which enabled me to assume the countenance of false bravery, the inexperience of C— C—, who, in spite of all the knowledge she had lately acquired,

was only a novice, caused me great anxiety. It was easy to abuse her natural wish to be polite, but that fear gave way very soon before the confidence I had in M— M—'s delicacy. I thought that, having seen how I had spent six hours with that young girl, knowing for a certainty that I intended to marry her, M— M— would never be guilty of such base treason. All these thoughts, worthy only of a weak and bashful jealousy, brought no conclusive decision; I had to follow the current and watch events.

At the appointed time I repaired to the casino, where I found my two lovely friends sitting by the fire.

"Good evening, my two divinities. Where is our charming Frenchman?"

"He has not arrived yet," answered M— M—, "but he will doubtless soon be here."

I took off my mask and, sitting between them, gave them a thousand kisses, taking good care not to show any preference; and, although I knew that they were aware of the unquestionable right I had upon both of them, I kept within the limits of the utmost decency. I congratulated them upon the mutual inclination they felt for each other, and I saw that they were pleased not to have to blush on that account.

More than one hour was spent in gallant and friendly conversation, without my giving any satisfaction to my burning desires. M— M— attracted me more than C— C—, but I would not for the world have offended that charming girl. M— M— was beginning to show some anxiety about the absence of M. de Bernis when the doorkeeper brought her a note from him.

"A courier," he wrote, "who arrived two hours ago, prevents my being happy to-night, for I am compelled to pass it in answering the dispatches I have received. I trust that you will forgive and pity me. May I hope that you will kindly grant me on Friday the pleasure of which I am so unfortunately deprived to-day? Let me know your answer by to-morrow. I wish ardently in that case to find you with the same guests, to whom I beg you will present my affectionate compliments."

"Well," said M— M—, "it is not his fault. We will sup without him. Will you come on Friday?"

"Yes, with the greatest pleasure. But what is the matter with you, dear C— C—? You look sad."

"Sad, no; unless it should be for the sake of my friend, for I have never seen a more polite and more obliging gentleman."

"Very well, dear; I am glad he has rendered you so susceptible."

"What do you mean? Could anyone be insensible to his merit?"

"Better still, but I agree with you. Only tell me if you love him?"

"Well, even if I loved him, do you think I would go and tell him? Besides, I am certain that he loves my friend."

So saying, she sat down on M— M—'s lap, calling her her own little wife, and my two beauties began to bestow on one another caresses which made me laugh heartily. Far from troubling their sport,

I excited them in order to enjoy a spectacle with which I had long been acquainted.

M— M— took up a book full of the most lascivious engravings, and said, with a significant glance in my direction, "Do you wish me to have a fire lighted in the alcove?"

I understood her, and replied, "You would oblige me, for, the bed been large, we can all three sleep comfortably in it."

I guessed that she feared my suspecting the ambassador of enjoying from the mysterious closet the sight of our amorous trio, and she wished to destroy that suspicion by her proposal.

The table having been laid in front of the alcove, supper was served, and we all did honour to it. We were all blessed with a devouring appetite. While M— M— was teaching her friend how to mix punch, I was admiring with delight the progress made in beauty by C— C—.

"Your bosom," I said to her, "must have become perfect during the last nine months."

"It is like mine," answered M— M—. "Would you like to see for yourself?"

Of course I did not refuse. M— M— unlaced her friend, who made no resistance, and, performing afterwards the same office upon herself, in less than two minutes I was admiring four rivals contending for the golden apple like the three goddesses. Paris himself would have been puzzled how to adjudge the prize.

While I was laughing with delight, the two friends were getting ready, and in a few minutes we were all three in bed.

We slept until we were awakened by the alarm, which I had taken care to set at four o'clock. We were certain of turning to good account the two hours we had then to spare before parting company, which we did at the dawn of day, humiliated at having to confess our exhaustion, but highly pleased with each other and longing for a renewal of our delightful pleasures.

The next day, however, when I came to think of that rather too lively night, during which, as is generally the case, Love had routed Reason, I felt some remorse. M— M— wanted to convince me of her love, and for that purpose she had combined all the virtues which I attached to my own affection, namely, honour, delicacy and truth; but her temperament, of which her mind was the slave, carried her towards excess, and she prepared everything in order to give way to it, while she awaited the opportunity of making me her accomplice. She was coaxing love to make it compliant and to succeed in mastering it because her heart, enslaved by her senses, never reproached her. She likewise tried to deceive herself by endeavouring to forget that I might complain of having been taken by surprise. She knew that, to utter such a complaint, I would have to acknowledge myself weaker or less courageous than she, and she relied upon my being ashamed to make such a confession. I had no doubt whatever that the absence of the ambassador had been arranged and concerted beforehand. I

could see still further, for it seemed evident to me that the two conspirators had foreseen that I would guess the artifice and that, feeling stung to the quick, in spite of all my regrets, I would not show myself less generous than they had been themselves. The ambassador having first procured me a delightful night, how could I refuse to let him enjoy as pleasant a one? My friends had argued very well, for, in spite of all the objections of my mind, I saw that I could not on my side put any obstacle in their way. C— C— was no impediment to them; they were certain of conquering her the moment she was not hindered by my presence. It rested entirely with M— M—, who had perfect control over her. Poor girl! I saw her on the high road to debauchery, and it was my own doing! I sighed when I thought how little I had spared them in our last orgy and what would become of me if both of them should happen to be, by my doing, in such a position as to be compelled to run away from the convent? I could imagine both of them thrown on my hands, and the prospect was not particularly agreeable. It would be an *embarras de richesse*. In this miserable contest between reason and prejudice, between nature and sentiment, I could not make up my mind either to go to the supper or to remain away from it. "If I go," said I to myself, "the night will pass with perfect decency, but I shall prove myself very ridiculous, jealous, ungrateful and even wanting in common politeness: if I remain away, C— C— is lost, at least in my estimation; for I feel that my love will no longer exist, and then goodbye to all idea of a marriage with her." In the perplexity of mind in which I found myself, I felt a want of something more certain than mere probabilities to base my decision upon. I put on my ~~mask~~ and, repairing to the mansion of the French ambassador, addressed myself to the gatekeeper, saying that I had a letter for Versailles and would thank him to deliver it to the courier when he went back to France with His Excellency's dispatches.

"But, sir," answered the man, "we have not had a special courier for the last two months."

"What? Did not a special messenger arrive here last night?"

"Then he must have come in through the garret window or down in the chimney, for, on the word of an honest man, none entered through the gate."

"But the ambassador worked all night?"

"That may be, sir, but not here, for His Excellency dined with the Spanish ambassador and did not return till very late."

I had guessed rightly; I could no longer entertain any doubt. It was all over; I could not draw back without shame. C— C— must resist if the game was distasteful to her; no violence would of course be offered to her. The die was cast!

Towards evening I went to the casino of Muran and wrote a short note to M— M—, requesting her to excuse me if some important business of M. de Bragadin's prevented me from spending the night with her and our two friends, to whom I sent my compliments as well

as my apologies. After that I returned to Venice but in rather an unpleasant mood; to divert myself I went to the gaming-table, and lost all night long.

Two days afterwards, being certain that a letter from M— M— awaited me at Muran, I went over, and the doorkeeper handed me a parcel in which I found a note from my nun and a letter from C— C—, for everything was in common between them.

Here is C— C—'s letter:

"We were very sorry, dearest friend, when we heard that we should not have the happiness of seeing you. My dear M— M—'s friend came shortly afterwards, and, when he read your note, he likewise expressed his deep regret. We expected to have a very dull supper, but the witty sayings of that gentleman enlivened us, and you cannot imagine of what follies we were guilty after partaking of some champagne punch. Our friend had become as gay as ourselves, and we spent the night in trios, not very fatiguing, but very pleasant. I can assure you that that man deserves to be loved; but he must acknowledge himself inferior to you in everything. Believe me, dearest, I shall ever love you, and you must forever remain the master of my heart."

In spite of all my vexation, this letter made me laugh; but M— M—'s note was much more singular. Here are the contents of it:

"I am certain, my own beloved, that you told a story out of pure politeness; but you had guessed that I expected you to do so. You have made our friend a splendid present in exchange for the one he made you when he did not object to his M— M— bestowing her heart upon you. You possess that heart entirely, dearest, and you would possess it under all circumstances; but how sweet it is to flavour the pleasures of love with the charms of friendship! I was sorry not to see you, but I knew that, if you had come, we would not have had much enjoyment, for our friend, notwithstanding all his wit, is not exempt from some natural prejudices. As for C— C—, her mind is now quite as free of them as our own; and I am glad she owes it to me. You must feel thankful to me for having completed her education and for rendering her in every way worthy of you. I wish you had been hiding in the closet, where I am certain you would have spent some delightful hours. On Wednesday next I shall be yours and all alone with you in your casino in Venice; let me know whether you will be at the usual hour near the statue of the hero Colleoni. In case you should be prevented, name any other day."

I had to answer those two letters in the same spirit in which they had been written, and, in spite of all the bitter feelings which were then raging in my heart, my answers had to be as sweet as honey. I was in need of great courage, but I said to myself: "*Georges Dandin, tu l'as voulu!*" I could not refuse to pay the penalty of my

own deeds, and I have never been able to ascertain whether the shame I felt was what is called shamefacedness. It is a problem which I leave to others.

In my letter to C— C— I had the courage, or the effrontery, to congratulate her and to encourage her to imitate M— M—, the best model, I said, I could propose to her.

I wrote to my nun that I would be punctual at the appointment near the statue, and, amidst many false compliments, which ought to have betrayed the true state of my heart, I told her that I admired the perfect education she had given to C— C—, but that I congratulated myself upon having escaped the torture I should have suffered in the mysterious observatory, for I felt I could not have borne it.

On the Wednesday I was punctual at the rendezvous, and I had not to wait long for M— M—, who came disguised in male attire. "No theatre to-night," she said to me. "Let us go to the *ridotto*, to lose or double our money." She had six hundred sequins; I had about one hundred. Fortune turned her back upon us, and we lost all. I expected that we would then leave the cut-throat place; but M— M—, having left me for a minute, came back with three hundred sequins which had been given her by her friend, whom she knew where to find. That money, given through love or friendship, brought her luck for a short time, and she soon won back all we had lost; but in our greediness or imprudence we continued to play, and finally we lost our last sequin. When we could play no longer, M— M— said to me, "Now that we need not fear thieves, let us go to our supper."

That woman, religious and a freethinker, libertine and gambler, was wonderful in all she did. She had just lost five hundred pounds, and she was as completely at her ease as if she had won a very large sum. It is true that the money she had just lost had not cost her much.

As soon as we were alone, she found me sad and low-spirited, although I tried hard not to appear so; but, as for her, always the same, she was handsome, brilliant, cheerful and amorous.

She thought she would bring back my spirits by giving me the fullest particulars of the night she had passed with C— C— and her friend, but she ought to have guessed that she was going the wrong way. That is a very common error; it comes from the mind, because people imagine that what they feel themselves others must feel likewise.

I was on thorns and tried everything to avoid that subject and lead the conversation into a different channel; for the amorous particulars on which she was dwelling with apparent delight vexed me greatly, and, spite causing coldness, I was afraid of not playing my part very warmly in the amorous contest which was at hand. When a lover doubts his own strength, he may almost always be sure that he will fail in his efforts.

After supper we went to bed in the alcove, where the beauty, the

mental and physical charms, the grace and ardour of my lovely nun cast all my bad temper to the winds and soon restored me to my usual good spirits. The nights being shorter, we spent two hours in the most delightful pleasures and then parted, satisfied and full of love.

Before leaving, M— M— asked me to go to her casino, get some money and gamble, taking her for my partner. I did so. I took all the gold I found, and, playing the martingale and doubling my stakes continuously, I won every day during the remainder of the carnival. I was fortunate enough never to lose the sixth card; and, if I had lost it, I should have been without money to play, for I had two thousand sequins on that card. I congratulated myself upon having increased the treasure of my dear mistress, who wrote to me that, for the sake of civility, we ought to have a supper *en partie carrée* on Shrove Monday. I consented.

That supper was the last I ever had in my life with C— C—. She was in excellent spirits; but I had made up my mind, and, as I paid all my attentions to M—M—, C—C— imitated my example without difficulty and devoted herself wholly to her new lover. Foreseeing that we would a little later be all of us in each other's way, I begged M— M— to arrange everything so that we could separate, and she contrived it marvellously well.

After supper the ambassador proposed a game of faro, which our beauties did not know; he called for cards and placed one hundred louis on the table before him; he dealt and took care to make C— C— win the whole of that sum. It was the best way to make her accept it as pin-money. The young girl, dazzled by so much gold and not knowing what to do with it, asked her friend to take care of it for her until such time as she should leave the convent to get married.

When the game was over, M— M— complained of a headache and said that she would go to bed in the alcove; she asked me to come and lull her to sleep. We thus left the new lovers free to be as gay as they chose. Six hours afterwards, when the alarum warned us that it was time to part, we found them asleep in each other's embrace. I had myself passed an amorous and quiet night, pleased with M— M— and without giving one thought to C— C—.

CHAPTER 45

THOUGH the infidelities of C— C— made me look at her with other eyes than before and though I had now no intention of making her the companion of my life, I could not help feeling that it had rested with me to stop her on the brink of the stream, and I therefore considered it my duty always to be her friend.

If I had been more logical, the resolution I would have taken with respect to her would doubtless have been of another kind. I should have said to myself: "After seducing her, I myself set the example of infidelity; I bade her follow blindly the advice of her friend,

although I knew that M— M—'s advice and example would end in her ruin; I insulted in the most grievous manner the delicacy of my mistress, and that before her very eyes; after all this how could I ask a weak woman to do what a man, priding himself on his strength, would shrink from attempting?" I should have stood self-condemned and have felt that it was my duty to remain the same to her; but, flattering myself that I was overcoming mere prejudices, I was in fact that most degraded of slaves, he who uses his strength to crush the weak.

The day after Shrove Tuesday, going to the casino of Muran, I found there a letter from M— M—, who gave me two pieces of bad news: that C— C— had lost her mother and the poor girl was in despair; and secondly, that the lay sister, whose rheum was cured, had returned to her post. Thus C— C— was deprived of her friend at a time when she would have given her consolation, of which she stood in great need. C— C—, it seemed, had gone to share the rooms of her aunt, who, being very fond of her, had obtained permission from the Superior. This circumstance would prevent the ambassador taking any more suppers with her, and I should have been delighted if chance had put this obstacle in his path a few days sooner.

All these misfortunes seemed of small account compared with what I was afraid of, for C— C— might have to pay the price for her pleasures, and I so far regarded myself as the origin of her unhappiness as to feel bound never to abandon her, and this might have involved me in terrible complications.

M— M— asked me to sup with her and her lover on the following Monday. I went and found them both sad—he for the loss of his new mistress, and she because she had no longer a friend to make the seclusion of the convent pleasant.

About midnight M. de Bernis left us, saying in a melancholy manner that he feared he should be obliged to pass several months in Vienna on important diplomatic business. Before parting we agreed to sup together every Friday.

When we were alone, M— M— told me the ambassador would be obliged to me if in future I would come to the casino two hours later. I understood that the good-natured and witty profligate had a very natural prejudice against indulging his amorous feelings except when he was certain of being alone.

M. de Bernis came to all our suppers till he left for Vienna, and always went away at midnight. He no longer made use of his hiding-place, partly because we now lay only in the recess and partly because, having had time to make love before my arrival, his desires were appeased. My love, indeed, was even hotter than it had been, since, seeing her only once a week and remaining faithful to her, I had always an abundant harvest to gather in. C— C—'s letters which she brought to me softened me to tears, for she said that after the loss of her mother she could not count upon the friendship of any of her relatives. She called me her sole friend, her only protector, and,

in speaking of her grief at not being able to see me any more whilst she remained in the convent, she begged me to remain faithful to her dear friend.

On Good Friday, when I got to the casino, I found the lovers overwhelmed with grief. Supper was served, but the ambassador, downcast and absent-minded, neither ate nor spoke, and M— M— was like a statue that moves at intervals by some mechanism. Good sense and ordinary politeness prevented me from asking any questions, but, on M— M— leaving us together, M. de Bernis told me that she was distressed, and with reason, since he was obliged to set out for Vienna fifteen days after Easter. "I may tell you confidentially," he added, "that I believe I shall scarcely be able to return, but she must not be told, as she would be in despair." M— M— came back in a few minutes, but it was easy to see she had been weeping.

After some commonplace conversation, M. de Bernis, seeing M— M— still low-spirited, said:

"Do not grieve thus, sweetheart; go I must; but my return is a matter of equal certainty when I shall have finished the important business which summons me to Vienna. You will still have the casino, but, dearest, both friendship and prudence make me advise you not to come here in my absence, for, after I shall have left Venice, I cannot depend upon the faith of the gondoliers in my service, and I suspect our friend here cannot flatter himself on his ability to get reliable ones. I may also tell you that I have strong reasons for suspecting that our intercourse is known to the State Inquisitors, who conceal their knowledge for political reasons; but I fancy the secret would soon come to light when I am no longer here and when the nun who connives at your departure from the convent knows that it is no longer for me that you leave it. The only people whom I would trust are the housekeeper and his wife. I shall order them, before I go, to look upon our friend here as myself, and you can make arrangements with them. I trust all will go well till my return if you will only behave discreetly. I will write to you under cover of the housekeeper; his wife will give you my letters as before, and in the same way you may reply. I must needs go, dearest one, but my heart is with you, and I leave you, till my return, in the hands of a friend whom I rejoice to have known. He loves you, he has a heart and knowledge of the world, and he will not let you make any mistakes."

M— M— was so affected by what the ambassador said that she entreated us to let her go, as she wished to be alone and lie down. As she went, we agreed to sup together on the following Thursday.

As soon as we were alone, the ambassador impressed me with the absolute necessity of concealing from her that he was going to return no more. "I am going," said he, "to work in concert with the Austrian cabinet on a treaty which will be the talk of Europe. I entreat you to write to me unreservedly and as a friend; and, if you love our common mistress, have a care for her honour and, above all, have the strength of mind to resist all projects which are certain to involve you

in misfortune and which will be equally fatal to both. You know what happened to Madame de Riva, a nun in the convent of S—. She had to disappear after it became known that she was with child, and M. de Frulai, my predecessor, went mad and died shortly after. J.-J. Rousseau told me that he died of poison, but Rousseau is a visionary who sees the black side of everything. For my part, I believe he died of grief at not being able to do anything for the unfortunate woman, who afterwards procured a dispensation from her vows from the Pope and, having got married, is now living in Padua without any position in society.

"Let the prudent and loyal friend master the lover; go and see M— M— sometimes in the parlour of the convent, but not here, or the boatmen will betray you. The knowledge which we both have that the girls are in a satisfactory condition is a great alleviation to my distress, but you must confess that you have been very imprudent. You have risked a terrible misfortune; consider the position you would have been in, for I am sure you would not have abandoned her. She had an idea that the danger might be overcome by means of drugs, but I convinced her that she was mistaken.

"In God's name, be discreet in future and write to me fully, for I shall always be interested in her fate, from both duty and sentiment."

We returned together to Venice, where we separated, and I passed the rest of the night in great distress. In the morning I wrote to the fair afflicted and, whilst endeavouring to console her to the best of my ability, tried to impress on her the necessity for prudence and the avoidance of such escapades as might eventually ruin us.

Next day I received her reply, every word of which spelt despair. Nature had given her a disposition which had become so intensified by indulgence that the cloister was unbearable to her, and I foresaw the hard fights I should have to undergo.

We saw each other the Thursday after Easter, and I had told her I would not come to the casino before midnight. She had had four hours to pass with her lover in tears and regrets, amongst which she often cursed her cruel fate and the foolish resolution which made her take the veil. We supped together, and, although the meal was a rich and delicate one, we did it little honour. When we had finished, the ambassador left, entreating me to remain, which I did, without thinking at all of the pleasures of a party of two, for Love lighteth not his torch at the hearts of two lovers who are full of grief and sorrow. M— M— had grown thin, and her condition excited my pity and shut out all other feelings. I held her a long time in my arms, covering her with tender and affectionate kisses, but I showed no intention of consoling her by amusements in which her spirit could not have taken part. She said before we parted that I had shown myself a true lover, and she asked me to consider myself thenceforth as her only friend and protector.

Next week, when we were together as usual, M. de Bernis called the housekeeper just before supper and in his presence executed a deed

in my behalf, which he made him sign. In this document he transferred to me all rights over the contents of the casino and charged him to consider me in all things as his master.

We arranged to sup together two days after, to make our farewells, but on my arrival I found M— M— by herself, standing up and pale as death—or, rather, as white as a statue of Carrara marble.

"He is gone," she said, "and he leaves me in your care. Fatal being, whom perchance I shall see no more, whom I thought I loved but as a friend, now you are lost to me I see my mistake. Before I knew him, I was not happy, but neither was I unhappy as I now am."

I passed the whole night beside her, striving by the most delicate attentions to soften her grief, but without success. Her character, as abandoned to sorrow as to pleasure, was displayed to me during that long and weary night. She told me at what hour I should come to the convent parlour the next day, and on my arrival I was delighted to find her not quite so sad. She showed me a letter which her lover had written her from Treviso, and she then told me that I must come and see her twice a week, warning me that she would be accompanied sometimes by one nun and sometimes by another, for she foresaw that my visits would become the talk of the convent as soon as it became known that I was the individual who used to go to mass at their church. She therefore told me to give in another name, to prevent C— C—'s aunt from becoming suspicious.

"Nevertheless," she added, "this will not prevent my coming alone when I have any matter of importance to communicate to you. Promise me, sweetheart, to sup and sleep at the casino at least once a week and write me a note each time by the housekeeper's wife."

I made no objection to promising her that much.

We thus passed a fortnight quietly enough, as she was happy again and her amorous inclinations had returned in full force. About this time she gave me a piece of news which delighted me, namely, that C— C— had no longer anything to fear.

Full of amorous wishes and having to be content with the teasing pleasure of seeing one another through a wretched grating, we racked our brains to find some way to be alone together to do what we liked without any risk.

"I am assured," she said, "of the good faith of the gardener's sister. I can go out and come in without fear of being seen, for the little door leading to the convent is not overlooked by any window—indeed, it is thought to be walled up. Nobody can see me crossing the garden to the little stream, which is considered unnavigable. All we need is a one-oared gondola, and I cannot believe that, with the help of money, you will not be able to find a boatman on whom we may rely."

I understood from these expressions that she suspected me of becoming cold towards her, and this suspicion pierced me to the heart.

"Listen," said I, "I will be the boatman myself. I will come to the quay, pass by the little door, and you shall lead me to your room,

where I will pass the whole night with you, and the day, too, if you think you can hide me."

"That plan," said she, "makes me shudder. I tremble at the danger to which you might be exposed. No, I should be too unhappy if I were to be the cause of your misfortune; but, as you can row, come in the boat, let me know the time as closely as possible; the trusty woman will be on the watch, and I will not keep you waiting four minutes. I will get into the boat, we will go to our beloved casino and then we shall be happy without fearing anything."

"I will think it over."

The way I took to satisfy her was as follows: I bought a small boat and, without telling her, went one night all by myself round the island to inspect the walls of the convent on the side of the lagune. With some difficulty I made out a little door, which I judged to be the only one by which she could pass; but to go from there to the casino was no small matter, since one was obliged to fetch a wide course, and with one oar I could not do the passage in less than a quarter of an hour, and that with much toil. Nevertheless, feeling sure of success, I told my pretty nun of the plan, and never was news received with so much pleasure. We set our watches together and fixed our meeting for the Friday following.

On the day appointed, an hour before sunset, I betook myself to St. Francis de la Vigne, where I kept my boat, and, having set it in order and dressed myself as a boatman, I got upon the poop and held a straight course for the little door, which opened the moment I arrived. M— M— came out wrapped in a cloak and, someone shutting the door after her, got on board my frail bark, and in a quarter of an hour we were at the casino. M— M— made haste to go in, but I stayed to belay my boat with a lock and chain against thieves, who pass the night pleasantly by stealing whatever they can lay their hands on.

Though I had rowed easily enough, I was in a bath of perspiration, which, however, by no means hindered my charming mistress from falling on my neck; the pleasure of meeting seemed to challenge her love, and proud of what I had done, I enjoyed her transports.

Not dreaming that I should have any occasion for a change of linen, I had brought none with me, but she soon found a cure for this defect; for, after having undressed me, she dried me lovingly, gave me one of her smocks, and I found myself dressed to admiration.

We had been too long deprived of our amorous pleasures to think of taking supper before we had offered a plenteous sacrifice to love. We spent two hours in the sweetest of intoxications, our bliss seeming more acute than at our first meeting. In spite of the fire which consumed me, in spite of the ardour of my mistress, I was sufficiently master of myself to disappoint her . . . ; for the picture which our friend had drawn was always before my eyes. M— M—, joyous and wanton, having me for the first time in the character of boatman, augmented our delights by her amorous caprices; but it was

useless for her to try to add fuel to my flame, since I loved her better than myself.

The night was short, for she was obliged to return at three in the morning and it struck one as we sat down to table. As the climax of ill luck, a storm came on whilst we were at supper. Our hair stood on end; our only hope was founded on the nature of these squalls, which seldom last more than an hour. We were in hopes, also, that it would not leave behind it too strong a wind, as is sometimes the case, for, though I was strong and sturdy, I was far from having the skill or experience of a professional boatman.

In less than half an hour the storm became violent, one flash of lightning followed another, the thunder roared and the wind grew to a gale. Yet, after a heavy rain, in less than an hour the sky cleared, but there was no moon, it being the day after the Ascension. Two o'clock struck. I put my head out at the window, but perceived that a contrary gale was blowing.

Ma tiranno del mar Libecchio resta.

This Libecchio which Ariosto calls, and with good reason, "the tyrant of the sea," is the southwesterly wind, which is commonly called *garbin* at Venice. I said nothing, but I was frightened. I told my sweetheart that we must needs sacrifice an hour of pleasure, since prudence would have it so.

"Let us set out forthwith, for, if the gale gets stronger, I shall not be able to double the island."

She saw my advice was not to be questioned, and, taking the key of her strong box, whence she desired to get some money, she was delighted to find her store increased fourfold. She thanked me for having told her nothing about it, assuring me she would have of me nothing but my heart, and, following me, she got into my boat and lay down at full length so as not to hinder its motion. I got upon the poop, as full of fear as courage, and in five minutes I had the good luck to double the point. But there it was that "the tyrant" was waiting for me; and it was not long before I felt that my strength would not outlast that of the winds. I rowed with all my strength, but all I could do was to prevent my boat from going back. For half an hour I was in this pitiful state, and I felt my strength failing without daring to say a word. I was out of breath, but could not rest a moment, since the least relaxation would have let the boat slip back, and this would have been a distance hard to recover. M— M— lay still and silent, for she perceived I had no breath wherewith to answer her. I began to give ourselves up as lost.

At that instant I saw in the distance a barque coming swiftly towards us. What a piece of luck! I waited till she caught us up, for, if I had not done so, I should not have been able to make myself heard, but, as soon as I saw her at my left hand, twelve feet off, I shouted, "Help! I will give two sequins!"

They lowered sail and came towards me, and, on their hailing me,

I asked for a man to take us to the opposite point of the island. They asked a sequin in advance, I gave it to them and promised the other to the man who would get on my poop and help me to make the point. In less than ten minutes we were opposite to the little stream leading to the convent, but the secret of it was too dear to be hazarded, so, as soon as we reached the point, I paid my preserver and sent him back. Henceforth the wind was in our favour, and we soon got to the little door, where M— M— landed, saying to me, "Go and sleep in the casino." I thought her advice wise and followed it; and, having the wind behind me, I got to the casino without trouble and slept till broad day. As soon as I had risen, I wrote to my dear mistress that I was well and that we should see each other at the grating. Having taken my boat back to St. Francis, I put on my mask and went to Liston.

In the morning M— M— came to the grating by herself, and we made all such observations as our adventures of the night would be likely to suggest; but, in place of deciding to follow the advice which prudence should have given us—namely, not to expose ourselves to danger in the future—we thought ourselves extremely prudent in resolving that, if we were again threatened by a storm, we would set out as soon as we saw it rising. All the same we had to confess that, if chance had not thrown the barque in our way, we should have been obliged to return to the casino, for M— M— could not have got to the convent; and how could she ever have entered its walls again? I should have been forced to leave Venice with her, and that forever. My life would have been finally and irretrievably linked with hers, and, without doubt, the various adventures which at the age of seventy-two years impel me to write these *Memoirs*, would never have taken place.

For the next three months we continued to meet each other once a week, always amorous and never disturbed by the slightest accidents.

M— M— could not resist giving the ambassador a full account of our adventures, and I had promised to write to him and always to write the whole truth. He replied by congratulating us on our good fortune, but he prophesied inevitable disaster if we had not the prudence to stop our intercourse.

Mr. Murray, the English ambassador, a witty and handsome man and a great amateur of the fair sex, wine and good cheer, was then keeping the fair Ancilla, who introduced me to him. This fine fellow became my friend. I was never unwelcome at their amorous battles, and the voluptuous Ancilla was delighted to have me for a witness. I never gave them the pleasure of mingling in the strife. I loved M— M—, but I must avow that my fidelity to her was not entirely dependent on my love. Though Ancilla was handsome, she inspired me with repugnance, for she was always hoarse and complained of a sharp pain in the throat; and, though her lover kept well, I was afraid of her, and not without cause, for the disease which ended the days of Francis I of France brought her to the grave in the following autumn. A quarter of an hour before she died, her brave Briton, yielding to the

lascivious requests of this new Messalina, offered in my presence the last sacrifice, in spite of a large sore on her face which made her look hideous.

This truly heroic action was known all over the town, and it was Murray himself who made it known, citing me as his witness.

This famous courtesan, whose beauty was justly celebrated, feeling herself eaten away by an internal disease, promised to give a hundred louis to a doctor named Lucchesi, who by dint of mercury undertook to cure her; but Ancilla specified in the agreement that she was not to pay the aforesaid sum till Lucchesi had offered with her an amorous sacrifice.

The doctor, having done his business as well as he could, wished to be paid without submitting to the conditions of the treaty, but Ancilla held her ground, and the matter was brought before a magistrate.

In England, where all agreements are binding, Ancilla would have won her case; but at Venice she lost it.

The judge, in giving sentence, said a condition, criminal *per se*, not fulfilled did not invalidate an agreement—a sentence abounding in wisdom, especially in this instance.

Two months before this woman had become disgusting, my friend M. Memmo, afterwards procurator, asked me to take him to her house. In the height of the conversation, what should come but a gondola, and we saw Count Rosenberg, the ambassador from Vienna, getting out of it. M. Memmo was thunderstruck (for a Venetian noble conversing with a foreign ambassador becomes guilty of treason to the state) and ran in hot haste from Ancilla's room, I after him; but on the stair he met the ambassador, who, seeing his distress, burst into a laugh and passed on. I got directly into M. Memmo's gondola, and we went forthwith to M. Cavalli, secretary to the State Inquisitors. M. Memmo could have taken no better course to avoid the troublesome consequences which this fatal meeting might have had, and he was very glad that I was with him to testify to his innocence and to the harmlessness of the occurrence.

M. Cavalli received M. Memmo with a smile, and told him he did well to come to confession without wasting any time. M. Memmo, much astonished at this reception, told him the brief history of the meeting, and the secretary replied with a grave air that he had no doubt as to the truth of his story, as the circumstances were in perfect correspondence with what he knew of the matter.

We came away extremely puzzled at the secretary's reply, and discussed the subject for some time; but then we came to the conclusion that M. Cavalli could have had no positive knowledge of the matter before we came and that he spoke as he did only from the instinct of an Inquisitor, who likes it to be understood that nothing is hid from him for a moment.

After the death of Ancilla, M. Murray remained without a titular mistress, but, fluttering about like a butterfly, he had, one after another, the prettiest girls in Venice. This good-natured Epicurean set out for

Constantinople two years later and was for twenty years the ambassador of the Court of St. James's at the Sublime Porte. He returned to Venice in 1778, with the intention of ending his days there, far from affairs of state, but he died in the lazaretto eight days before the completion of his quarantine.

At play fortune continued to favour me; my commerce with M— M— could not be discovered now that I was my own waterman; and the nuns who were in the secret were too deeply involved not to keep it. So I led a merry life, but I foresaw that, as soon as M. de Bernis decided to let M— M— know that he would not return to Venice, he would recall his people, and we should then have the casino no longer. I knew, besides, that, when the rough season came on, it would be impossible for me by myself to continue our voyages.

The first Monday in October, when the theatres are opened and masks may be worn, I went to St. Francis to get my boat and thence to Muran for my mistress, afterwards making for the casino. The nights were now long enough for us to have ample time for enjoyment, so we began by making an excellent supper and then devoted ourselves to the worship of Love and Sleep. Suddenly, in the midst of a moment of ecstasy, I heard a noise in the direction of the canal which aroused my suspicions, and I rushed to the window. What was my astonishment and anger to see a large boat taking mine in tow! Nevertheless, without giving way to my passion, I shouted to the robbers that I would give them ten sequins if they would be kind enough to return me my boat. A shout of laughter was all the reply they made, and, not believing what I said, they continued their course. What was I to do? I dared not cry, "Stop thief!" and, not being endued with the power of walking on the water dry-footed, I could not give chase to the robbers. I was in the utmost distress, and for the moment M— M— showed signs of terror, for she did not see how I could remedy this disaster.

I dressed myself hastily, giving no more thoughts to love, my only comfort being that I had still two hours to get the indispensable boat, should it cost me a hundred sequins. I should have been in no perplexity if I had been able to hire one, but the gondoliers would infallibly make proclamation over the whole of Muran that they had taken a nun to such a convent, and all would have been lost.

The only way, then, that was open to me was either to buy a boat or to steal one. I put my pistols and dagger in my pocket, took some money and, with an oar on my shoulder, set out.

The robbers had filed the chain of my boat with a silent file; this I could not do, and I could only reckon on having the good luck to find a boat moored with cords.

Coming to the large bridge, I saw boats and to spare, but there were people on the quay, and I would not risk taking one. Seeing a tavern open at the end of the quay, I ran like a madman and asked if there were any boatmen there; the drawer told me there were two, but they were drunk. I came up to them, and said, "Who will take me to Venice for eighty sous?"

"I" and "I"; and they began to quarrel as to who should go. I quieted them by giving forty sous to the more drunken of the two, and I went out with the other.

As soon as we were on our way, I said, "You are too drunk to take me, lend me your boat, and I will give it back to you to-morrow."

"I don't know you."

"I will deposit ten sequins, but your boat is not worth that. Who will be your surety?"

He took me back to the tavern, and the drawer went bail for him. Well pleased, I took my man to the boat, and, having furnished it with a second oar and two poles, he went away, chuckling at having made a good bargain, while I was glad to have had the worst of it. I had been an hour away and, on entering the casino, found my dear M—M— in agony; but, as soon as she saw my beaming face, all the laughter came back on hers. I took her to the convent and then went to St. Francis, where the keeper of the boathouse looked as if he thought me a fool when I told him that I had trucked away my boat for the one I had with me. I put on my mask and went forthwith to my lodging and to bed, for these annoyances had been too much for me.

About this time my destiny made me acquainted with a nobleman called Mark Antony Zorzi, a man of parts and famous for his skill in writing verses in the Venetian dialect. Zorzi, who was very fond of the play and desired to offer a sacrifice to Thalia, wrote a comedy which the audience took the liberty of hissing; but, having persuaded himself that his piece failed only through the conspiracies of the Abbé Chiari, who wrote for the Theatre of St. Angelo, he declared open war against all the abbé's plays.

I felt no reluctance whatever to visit M. Zorzi, for he possessed an excellent cook and a charming wife. He knew that I did not care for Chiari as an author, and he had in his pay people who, without pity, rhyme or reason, hissed all the compositions of the ecclesiastical playwright. My part was to criticise them in "hammer" verses, a kind of doggerel then much in fashion, and Zorzi took care to distribute my lucubrations far and wide. These manœuvres made me a powerful enemy in the person of M. Condulmer, who liked me none the better for having all the appearance of being in high favour with Madame Zorzi, to whom before my appearance he had paid diligent court. This M. Condulmer was to be excused for not caring for me, for, having a large share in the St. Angelo Theatre, the failure of the abbé's pieces was a loss to him, as the boxes had to be let at a very low rent and all men are governed by interested motives.

This M. Condulmer was sixty years old, but, with all the greenness of youth, he was still fond of women, gaming and money, and he was, in fact, a money-lender; but he knew how to pass for a saint, as he took care to go to mass every morning at St. Mark's and never omitted to shed tears before the crucifix. The following year he was made a councillor and in that capacity was for eight months a State Inquisitor. Having thus attained this diabolically eminent (or eminently diabolical)

position, he had not much difficulty in showing his colleagues the necessity of putting me under The Leads as a disturber of the peace of the Republic. In the beginning of the winter the astounding news of the treaty between France and Austria was divulged—a treaty by which the political balance was entirely readjusted and which was received with incredulity by the Powers. The whole of Italy had reason to rejoice, for the treaty guarded that fair land from becoming the theatre of war on the slightest difference which might arise between the two Powers. What astonished the most acute was that this wonderful treaty was conceived and carried out by a young ambassador who had hitherto been famed only as a wit. The first foundations had been laid in 1750 by Madame de Pompadour, Count Kaunitz (who was created a prince) and M. l'Abbé de Bernis, who was not known till the following year, when the King made him ambassador to Venice. The House of Bourbon and the House of Hapsburg had been foes for two hundred and forty years when this famous treaty was concluded; but it lasted for only forty years, and it is not likely that any treaty will last longer between two courts so essentially opposed to one another.

The Abbé de Bernis was created Minister for Foreign Affairs some time after the ratification of the treaty; three years after he re-established the parliament, became a cardinal, was disgraced and finally sent to Rome, where he died. *Mors ultima linea rerum est.*

Affairs fell out as I had foreseen, for, nine months after he left Venice, he conveyed to M— M— the news of his recall, though he did it in the most delicate manner. Nevertheless, M— M— felt the blow so severely that she would very possibly have succumbed, had I not been preparing her for it in every way I could think of. M. de Bernis sent me all instructions.

He directed that all the contents of the casino should be sold and the proceeds given to M— M—, with the exception of the books and prints, which the housekeeper was ordered to bring to Paris. It was a nice breviary for a cardinal, but would to God they had nothing worse!

Whilst M— M— abandoned herself to grief, I carried out the orders of M. de Bernis, and by the middle of January we no longer had a casino. She kept by her two thousand sequins and her pearls, intending to sell them later on to buy herself an annuity.

We were now able to see each other only at the grating; and soon, worn with grief, she fell dangerously ill, and on the 2nd of February I recognised in her features the symptoms of approaching death. She sent me her jewel case, with all her diamonds and nearly all her money, all the scandalous books she possessed and all her letters, telling me that, if she did not die, I was to return her the whole, but that all belonged to me if, as she thought, she should succumb to the disease. She also told me that C— C— was aware of her state and asked me to take pity on her, as my letters were her only comfort, and that she hoped to have strength to read them till her latest breath.

I burst into tears, for I loved her passionately, and I promised her to come and live in Muran until she recovered her health.

Having placed the property in a gondola, I went to the Bragadin Palace to deposit it and then returned to Muran to get Laura to find me a furnished room where I could live as I liked. "I know of a good room, with meals provided," she said. "You will be quite comfortable and will get it cheaply, and, if you like to pay in advance, you need not even say who you are. The old man to whom the house belongs lives on the ground floor; he will give you all the keys, and, if you like, you need see no one."

She gave me the address, and I went there on the spot and, having found everything to my liking, paid a month in advance, and the thing was done. It was a little house at the end of a blind alley abutting on the canal. I returned to Laura's house to tell her that I wanted a servant to get my food and make my bed, and she promised to get me one by the next day.

Having set all in order for my new lodging, I returned to Venice and packed my mails as if I were about to make a long journey. After supper I took leave of M. de Bragadin and his two friends, telling them that I was going to be away for several weeks on important business.

Next day, going to my new room, I was surprised to find there Tonine, Laura's daughter, a pretty girl no more than fifteen years old, who told me with a blush but with more spirit than I gave her credit for, that she would serve me as well as her mother would have done.

I was in too much distress to thank Laura for this pretty present, and I even determined that her daughter should not stay in my service. We know how much such resolutions are commonly worth. In the meanwhile I was kind to the girl. "I am sure," I said, "of your good will, but I must talk to your mother. I must be alone," I added, "as I have to write all day, and I shall not take anything till the evening." She then gave me a letter, begging pardon for not having given it me sooner. "You must never forget to deliver messages," I said, "for, if you had waited any longer before bringing me this letter, it might have had the most serious consequences." She blushed, begged pardon and went out of the room. The letter was from C— C—, who told me that her friend was in bed and that the doctor had pronounced her illness to be fever. I passed the rest of the day in putting my room in order and in writing to C— C— and her suffering friend.

Towards evening Tonine brought in the candles and told me my supper was ready. "Attend me," I said. Seeing that she had laid supper for only one—a pleasing proof of her modesty—I told her to get another knife and fork, as I wished her always to take her meals with me. I can give no account of my motives. I only wished to be kind to her, and I did everything in good faith. By and by, reader, we shall see whether this is not one of the devices by which the Devil compasses his ends.

Not having any appetite, I ate little, but I thought everything good with the exception of the wine; but Tonine promised to get some better

by the next day, and, when supper was over, she went to sleep in the ante-room.

After sealing my letters, wishing to know whether the outer door was locked, I went out and saw Tonine in bed, sleeping peacefully, or pretending to do so. I might have suspected her thoughts, but I had never been in a similar situation, and I measured the extremity of my grief by the indifference with which I looked at this girl; she was pretty, but for all that I felt that neither she nor I ran any risk.

Next day, waking very early, I called her, and she came in neatly dressed. I gave her my letter to C— C— (which enclosed the letter to M— M—), telling her to take it to her mother and then to return to make my coffee.

"I shall dine at noon, Tonine," I said. "Take care to get what is necessary in good time."

"Sir, I prepared yesterday's supper myself, and, if you like, I can cook all your meals."

"I am satisfied with your abilities, go on; and here is a sequin for expenses."

"I still have a hundred and twenty sous remaining from the one you gave me yesterday, and that will be enough."

"No, they are for yourself, and I shall give you as much every day."

Her delight was so great that I could not prevent her covering my hand with kisses. I took care to draw it back and not to kiss her in return, for I felt as if I should be obliged to laugh and this would have dishonoured my grief.

The second day passed like the first. Tonine was glad that I said no more about speaking to her mother and drew the conclusion that her services were agreeable to me. Feeling tired and weak and fearing that I should not wake early enough to send the letter to the convent, but not wishing to rouse Tonine if she were asleep, I called her softly. She rose immediately and came into my room with nothing on but a slight petticoat. Pretending to see nothing, I gave her my letter and told her to take it to her mother in the morning before she came into my room. She went out, saying that my instructions should be carried out, but, as soon as she was gone, I could not resist saying to myself that she was very pretty; and I felt both sad and ashamed at the reflection that this girl could very easily console me. I hugged my grief and determined to separate myself from a being who made me forget it.

"In the morning," I said, "I will tell Laura to get me something less seducing." But the night brought counsel, and in the morning I put on the armour of sophism, telling myself that my weakness was no fault of the girl's and that it would therefore be unjust to punish her for it. We shall see, dear reader, how all this ended.

CHAPTER 46

TONINE had what is called tact and common sense and, thinking these qualities were required in our economy, she behaved with great delicacy, not going to bed before receiving my letters and never coming into my room except in a proper dress, and all this pleased me. For a fortnight M— M— was so ill that I expected every moment to hear the news of her death. On Shrove Tuesday C— C— wrote that her friend was not strong enough to read my letter and that she was going to receive extreme unction. This news so shocked me that I could not rise, and I passed the whole day in weeping and writing, Tonine not leaving me till midnight. I could not sleep. On Ash Wednesday I got a letter, in which C— C— told me that the doctor had no hopes for her friend and that he gave her only a fortnight to live. A slow fever was wasting her away, her weakness was extreme and she could scarcely swallow a little broth. She had also the misfortune to be harassed by her confessor, who made her foretaste all the terrors of death. I could solace my grief only by writing, and Tonine now and again made bold to observe that I was cherishing my grief and that it would be the death of me. I knew myself that I was making my anguish more poignant and that keeping to my bed, continued writing and no food would finally drive me mad. I had told my grief to poor Tonine, whose chief duty was to wipe away my tears. She had compassion on me.

A few days later, after assuring C— C— that, if our friend died, I should not survive her, I asked her to tell M— M— that, if she wanted me to take care of my life, she must promise to let me carry her off on her recovery.

"I have," I said, "four thousand sequins and her diamonds, which are worth six thousand; we should, therefore, have a sufficient sum to enable us to live honourably in any part of Europe."

C— C— wrote to me the following day and said that my mistress, after hearing my letter read, had fallen into a kind of convulsion and, becoming delirious, talked incessantly in French for three whole hours in a fashion which would have made all the nuns take to their heels if they had understood her, I was in despair and was nearly raving as wildly as my poor nun. Her delirium lasted three days, and, as soon as she got back her reason, she charged her young friend to tell me that she was sure to get well if I promised to keep to my word and carry her off as soon as her health would allow. I hastened to reply that, if I lived, she might be sure my promise would be fulfilled.

Thus continuing to deceive each other in all good faith, we got better, for every letter from C— C—, telling me how the convalescence of her friend was progressing, was to me as balm. And, as my mind grew more composed, my appetite also grew better, and, my health improving day by day, I soon, though quite unconsciously, began to take pleasure in the simple ways of Tonine, who now never left me at night before she saw that I was asleep.

Towards the end of March M— M— wrote to me herself, saying that

she believed herself out of danger and that, by taking care, she hoped to be able to leave her room after Easter. I replied that I should not leave Muran till I had the pleasure of seeing her at the grating, where, without hurrying ourselves, we could plan the execution of our scheme.

It was now seven weeks since M. de Bragadin had seen me, and, thinking that he would be getting anxious, I resolved to go and see him that very day. Telling Tonine that I should not be back till the evening, I started for Venice without a cloak, for, having gone to Muran masked, I had forgotten to take one. I had spent forty-eight days without going out of my room, chiefly in tears and distress and without taking any food. I had just gone through an experience which flattered my self-esteem. I had been served by a girl who would have passed for a beauty anywhere in Europe. She was gentle, thoughtful and delicate, and without being taxed with foppishness, I think I may say that, if she was not in love with me, she was at all events inclined to please me to the utmost of her ability; for all that, I had been able to withstand her youthful charms, and I now scarcely dreaded them. Seeing her every day, I had dispersed my amorous fancies, and friendship and gratitude seemed to have vanquished all other feelings, for I was obliged to confess that this charming girl had lavished on me the most tender and assiduous care. She had passed whole nights on a chair by my bedside, tending me like a mother and never giving me the slightest cause for complaint.

Never had I given her a kiss, never had I allowed myself to undress in her presence, and never (with one exception) had she come into my room without being properly dressed. For all that, I knew that I had fought a battle, and I felt inclined to boast at having won the victory. There was only one circumstance that vexed me, namely, that I was nearly certain that neither M— M— nor C— C— would consider such continence to be within the bounds of possibility if they heard of it and that Laura herself, to whom her daughter would tell the whole story, would be sceptical, though she might out of kindness pretend to believe it all.

I got to M. de Bragadin's just as the soup was being served. He welcomed me heartily and was delighted at having foreseen that I should thus surprise him. Besides my two other old friends, there were De la Haye, Bavois and Dr. Righelini at table.

"What! you without a cloak!" said M. Dandolo.

"Yes," said I, "for, having gone out with my mask on, I forgot to bring one."

At this they laughed, and, without putting myself out, I sat down. No one asked where I had been so long, for it was understood that that question should be left to me to answer or not. Nevertheless, De la Haye, who was bursting with curiosity, could not refrain from breaking some jests on me.

"You have got so thin," said he, "that uncharitable people will be rather hard on you."

"I trust they will not say that I have been passing my time with the Jesuits."

"You are sarcastic. They may say, perhaps, that you have passed your time in a hothouse under the influence of Mercury."

"Don't be afraid, sir, for, to escape this hasty judgment, I shall go back this evening."

"No, no, I am quite sure you will not."

"Believe me, sir," said I, with a bantering tone, "that I deem your opinion of too much consequence not to be governed by it."

Seeing that I was in earnest, my friends were angry with him, and the Aristarchus was in some confusion.

Righelini, who was one of Murray's intimate friends, said to me in a friendly way that he had been longing to tell Murray of my re-appearance and of the falsity of all the reports about me.

"We will go to sup with him," said I, "and I will return after supper."

Seeing that M. de Bragadin and his two friends were uneasy about me, I promised to dine with them on April twenty-fifth, St. Mark's Day.

As soon as Mr. Murray saw me, he fell on my neck and embraced me. He introduced me to his wife, who asked me to supper with great politeness. After Murray had told me the innumerable stories which had been made about my disappearance, he asked me if I knew a little story by the Abbé Chiari, which had come out at the end of the carnival. As I said that I knew nothing about it, he gave me a copy, telling me I would like it. He was right. It was a satire in which the Zorzi clique was pulled to pieces and in which I played a very poor part. I did not read it till some time later and in the meantime put it in my pocket. After a very good supper I took a gondola to return to Muran.

It was midnight and very dark, so that I did not perceive the gondola to be ill-covered and in wretched order. A fine rain was falling when I got in, and, the drops getting larger, I was soon wet to the skin. No great harm was done, as I was close to my quarters. I groped my way upstairs and knocked at the door of the ante-room, where Tonine, who no longer expected me, was sleeping.

Awake in a moment, she came to open the door in her smock and without a light. As I wanted one, I told her to get the flint and steel, which she did, warning me in a modest voice that she was not dressed. "That's of no consequence," said I, "provided you are covered." She said no more and soon lighted a candle, but she could not help laughing when she saw me dripping wet.

"I only want you, my dear, to dry my hair," said I.

She quickly set to work with powder and powder puff in hand, but her smock was short and loose at the top, and I repented, rather too late, that I had not given her time to dress. I felt that all was lost, all the more so as, having to use both her hands, she could not hold her smock and conceal two swelling spheres more seductive than the apples of Hesperides. How could I help seeing them? I shut my eyes and said, "For shame!" But I gave in at last and fixed such a hungry gaze upon

poor Tonine that she blushed. "Come," said I, "take your smock between your teeth, and then I shall see no more." But it was worse than before, and I had only added fuel to the fire; for, as the veil was short, I could see the bases and almost the frieze of two marble columns; and at this sight I gave a voluptuous cry. Not knowing how to conceal everything from my gaze, Tonine let herself fall on the sofa, and I, my passions at fever-heat, stood beside her, not knowing what to do.

"Well," she said, "shall I go and dress and then do your hair?"

"No, come and sit on my knee and cover my eyes with your hands."

She came obediently, but the die was cast and my resistance overcome. I clasped her in my arms and, without any more thoughts of playing at blindman's buff, threw her on the bed and covered her with kisses. And, as I swore that I would always love her, she opened her arms to receive me in a way that showed how long she had been waiting for this moment.

I plucked the rose, and, then, as ever, I thought it the rarest I had ever gathered since I had laboured in the harvest of the fruitful fields of love.

When I awoke in the morning, I found myself more deeply in love with Tonine than I had been with any other woman. She had got up without waking me, but, as soon as she heard me stirring, she came, and I tenderly chid her for not waiting for me to give her good morrow. Without answering me, she gave me M— M—'s letter. I thanked her, but, putting the letter on one side, I took her in my arms and set her by my side. "What a wonder!" cried Tonine. "You are not in a hurry to read that letter! Faithless man, why did you not let me cure you six weeks ago? How lucky I am, thanks to the rain! I do not blame you, dear, but love me as you love her who writes to you every day, and I shall be satisfied."

"Do you know who she is?"

"She lives in a boarding-house, and is as beautiful as an angel; but she is there, and I am here. You are my master, and I will be your servant as long as you like."

I was glad to leave her in error and swore an everlasting love; but during our conversation she had sat up in the bed, and I entreated her to lie down again; but she said that, on the contrary, it was time for me to get up for dinner, for she wanted to give me a dainty meal cooked in the Venetian manner.

"Who is the cook?" said I.

"I am, and I have been using all my skill on it since five, when I got up."

"What time is it now, then?"

"Past one."

The girl astonished me. She was no longer the shy Tonine of last night; she had that exultant air which happiness bestows and the look of pleasure which the delights of love give to a young beauty. I could not understand how I had escaped from doing homage to her beauty when I first saw her at her mother's house. But I was then too deeply

in love with C— C—, I was in too great distress; and, moreover, Tonine was then unformed. I got up and, making her bring me a cup of coffee, asked her to keep the dinner back for a couple of hours.

I found M— M—'s letter affectionate but not so interesting as it would have been the day before. I set myself to answer it and was almost thunderstruck to find the task, for the first time, a painful one. However, my short journey to Venice supplied me with talk which covered four pages.

I had an exquisite dinner with my charming Tonine. Looking at her as at the same time my wife, my mistress and my housekeeper, I was delighted to find myself happy at such a cheap rate. We spent the whole day at the table talking of our love and giving each other a thousand little marks of it, for there is no such rich and pleasant matter for conversation as when they who talk are parties to an amorous suit. She told me with charming simplicity that she had known perfectly well that she could not make me amorous of her because I loved another and that her only hope was therefore in a surprise, and that she had foreseen the happy moment when I told her that she need not dress to light a candle.

Tonine was naturally quick-witted, but did not know how either to read or to write. She was enchanted to see herself become rich (for she thought herself so) without a soul at Muran being able to breathe a word against her honour. I passed three weeks in the company of this delightful girl, weeks which I still reckon among the happiest of my life; and what embitters my old age is that, having a heart as warm as ever, I have no longer the strength necessary to secure a single day as blissful as those which I owed to this charming girl.

Towards the end of April I saw M— M— at the grating, looking thin and much changed but out of danger. I therefore returned to Venice. In my interview, calling my attachment and tender feelings to my aid, I succeeded in behaving in such wise that she could not possibly detect the change which a new love had worked in my heart. I shall be, I trust, easily believed when I say that I was not imprudent enough to let her suspect that I had given up the idea of escaping with her, upon which she counted more than ever. I was afraid lest she should fall ill again if I took this hope away from her. I kept my casino, which cost me little, and, as I went to see M— M— twice a week, I slept there on those occasions and made love to my darling Tonine.

Having kept my word with my friends by dining with them on St. Mark's Day, I went with Dr. Righelini to the parlour of the Vierges to see the taking of the veil.

The Convent of the Vierges is within the jurisdiction of the Doge, whom the nuns style "Most Serene Father." They all belong to the first families in Venice.

While I was praising the beauty of Mother M— E— to Dr. Righelini, he whispered to me that he could get her for me for a money payment if I were curious in the matter. A hundred sequins for her and ten

sequins for the go-between was the price fixed on. He assured me that Murray had had her and could have her again. Seeing my surprise, he added that there was not a nun whom one could not have by paying for her, that Murray had the courage to disburse five hundred sequins for a nun of Muran, a rare beauty, who was afterwards the mistress of the French ambassador.

Though my passion for M— M— was on the wane, I felt my heart gripped as by a hand of ice, and it was with the greatest difficulty that I made no sign. Notwithstanding, I took the story for an atrocious calumny, but yet the matter was too near my heart for me to delay in bringing it to light at the earliest opportunity. I therefore replied to Righelini in the calmest manner possible that one or two nuns might be had for money, but that it could happen very rarely on account of the difficulties in most convents.

"As for the nun of Muran, justly famous for her beauty, if she be M— M—, nun of the convent of X—, I not only disbelieve that Murray ever had her, but I am sure she was never the French ambassador's mistress. If he knew her, it could have been only at the grating, where I really cannot say what happens."

Righelini, who was an honourable and spirited man, answered me coldly that the English ambassador was a man of his word and that he had the story from his own lips.

"If Mr. Murray," he continued, "had not told it to me under the seal of secrecy, I would make him tell it to you himself. I shall be obliged if you will take care that he never knows I told you of it."

"You may rely on my discretion."

The same evening, supping at Murray's casino with Righelini, having the matter at heart and seeing before me the two men who could clear up everything to my satisfaction, I began to speak with enthusiasm of the beauty of M— E—, whom I had seen at the Vierges.

Here the ambassador struck in, taking the ball on the hop. "Between friends," said he, "you can get yourself the enjoyment of those charms if you are willing to sacrifice a sum of money—not too much, either, but you must have the key."

"That's what people made you believe."

"No, they proved it to me, and with less trouble than you might suppose."

"If you are sure, I congratulate you and doubt no more. I envy your fortune, for I don't believe a more perfect beauty could be found in all the convents of Venice."

"There you are wrong. Sister M— M— at X—, in Muran, is certainly handsomer."

"I have heard her talked of and I have seen her once, but I do not think it possible that she can be procured for money."

"I think so," said he, laughing, "and, when I think, I mostly have good reasons."

"You surprise me; but, all the same, I don't mind betting you are deceived."

"You would lose. As you have seen her only once, I suppose you would not recognise her portrait?"

"I should, indeed, as her face left a strong impression on my mind."

"Wait a minute."

He got up from the table, went out and returned a minute after with a box containing eight or ten miniatures, all in the same style—with hair in disorder and bare bosoms.

"These," said I, "are rare charms with which you have doubtless a near acquaintance?"

"Yes, and, if you recognise any of them, be discreet."

"You need not be afraid. There are three I recognise, and this looks like M— M—; but confess that you may have been deceived, unless you had her in the convent or here, for there are other women like her."

"Why do you think I have been deceived? I had her here in her religious habit and spent a whole night with her; and it was to her individually that I sent a purse containing five hundred sequins. I gave fifty to the good procurer."

"You visited her in the parlour, I suppose, after having her here?"

"No, never, as she was afraid her titular lover might hear of it. You know he was the French ambassador."

"But she saw him only in the parlour."

"She used to go to his house in secular dress whenever he wanted her. I was told that by the man who brought her here."

"Have you had her several times?"

"Only once and that was enough, but I can have her whenever I like for a hundred sequins."

"All that may be the truth, but I would wager five hundred sequins that you have been deceived."

"You shall have your answer in three days."

I was perfectly certain, I repeat, that the whole affair was a piece of knavery; but it was necessary to have it proved, and I shuddered when the thought came into my head that, after all, it might be a true story. In this case I should have been freed from a good many obligations, but I was strongly persuaded of her innocence. At all events, if I were to find her guilty (which was amongst possible occurrences), I resigned myself to lose five hundred sequins as the price of this horrible discovery and this addition to my experiences of life. I was full of restless anguish—the worst, perhaps, of the torments of the mind. If the honest Englishman had been the victim of a mystification, or rather knavery, my regard for M— M—'s honour compelled me to find a way to undeceive him without compromising her; and such was my plan and thus fortune favoured me.

Three or four days after Mr. Murray told the doctor that he wished to see me. We went to him, and he greeted me thus, "I have won; for a hundred sequins I can have the fair nun!"

"Alas!" said I, "there go my five hundred sequins."

"No, not five hundred, my dear fellow, for I should be ashamed to

win so much of you, but the hundred she is to cost me. If I win, you shall pay for my pleasure, and, if I lose, I shall give her nothing."

"How is the problem to be solved?"

"My Mercury tells me that we must wait for a day when masks are worn. He is endeavouring at present to find out a way to convince both of us, for otherwise neither you nor I would feel compelled to pay the wager, and, if I really have M— M—, my honour would not allow me to let her suspect that I had betrayed the secret."

"No, that would be an unpardonable crime. Hear my plan, which will satisfy us both, for, after it has been carried out, each of us will be sure that he has fairly won or fairly lost. As soon as you have possessed yourself of the real or pretended nun, leave her on some pretext and meet me in a place to be agreed upon. We will then go together to the convent, and I will ask for M— M—. Will seeing her and speaking to her convince you that the woman you have left at home is a mere impostor?"

"Perfectly, and I shall pay my wager with the greatest willingness."

"I may say the same. If, when I summon M— M— to the parlour, the lay sister tells us she is ill or busy, we will go, and the wager will be yours; you will sup with the fair, and I will go elsewhere."

"So be it; but, since all this will be at night-time, it is possible that, when you ask for her, the sister will tell you that no one can be seen at such an hour."

"Then I shall lose."

"You are quite sure, then, that, if she be in the convent, she will come down?"

"That's my business. I repeat, if you don't speak to her, I shall hold myself to have lost a hundred sequins, or a thousand if you like."

"One cannot speak plainer than that, my dear fellow, and I thank you beforehand."

"The only thing I ask you is to come sharp on time and not to come too late for a convent."

"Will an hour after sunset suit you?"

"Admirably."

"I shall also make it my business to compel my masked mistress to stop where she is, even though it be M— M— herself."

"She won't have long to wait if you will take her to a casino which I myself possess at Muran and where I secretly keep a girl of whom I am amorous. I will take care that she shall not be there on the appointed day, and I will give you the key of the casino. I shall also see that you find a delicate cold supper ready."

"That is admirable, but I must be able to point out the place to my Mercury."

"True! I will give you a supper to-morrow, the greatest secrecy to be observed between us. We will go to my casino in a gondola, and after supper we will go out by the street door; thus you will know the way by land and water. You will only have to tell the procurer the name of the canal and of the house, and on the day fixed you shall have the

key. You will find there only an old man who lives on the ground floor, and he will see neither those who go out nor those who come in. My sweetheart will see nothing and will not be seen; and all, trust me, will turn out well."

"I begin to think I have lost my bet," said the Englishman, who was delighted with the plan. "But it matters not, I can gaily encounter either loss or gain."

We made our appointment for the next day and separated.

On the following morning I went to Muran to warn Tonine that I was going to sup with her and bring two of my friends; and, as my English friend paid as great court to Bacchus as to Cupid, I took care to send my little housekeeper several bottles of excellent wine. Charmed with the prospect of doing the honours of the table, Tonine only asked if my friends would go away after supper. I said "yes," and this reply made her happy; she only cared for the dessert.

After leaving her, I went to the convent and passed an hour with M— M— in the parlour. I was glad to see that she was getting back her health and beauty every day, and, having complimented her upon it, I returned to Venice. In the evening my two friends kept their appointment to the minute, and we went to my little casino at two hours after sunset.

Our supper was delicious, and my Tonine charmed me with the gracefulness of her bearing. I was delighted to see Righelini enchanted and the ambassador dumb with admiration. When I was in love, I did not encourage my friends to cajole my sweetheart, but I became full of complaisance when time had cooled the heat of my passion.

We parted about midnight, and, having taken Mr. Murray to the spot where I was to wait for him on the day of trial, I returned to compliment my charming Tonine as she deserved. She praised my two friends and could not express her surprise at seeing our English friend going away, fresh and nimble on his feet, notwithstanding his having emptied by himself six bottles of my best wine. Murray looked like a fine Bacchus after Rubens.

On Whitsunday Righelini came to tell me that the English ambassador had made all arrangements with the alleged procurer of M— M— for Whittuesday. I gave him the keys of my abode at Muran and told him to assure Murray that I would keep the appointment at the exact time agreed upon.

My impatience brought on palpitation of the heart, which was extremely painful, and I passed the two nights without closing an eye; for, although I was convinced of M— M—'s innocence, my agitation was extreme. But whence all this anxiety? Merely from a desire to see the ambassador undeceived. M— M— must in his eyes have seemed a common prostitute, and the moment in which he would be obliged to confess himself the victim of roguery would re-establish the honour of the nun.

Mr. Murray was as impatient as myself, with this difference that,

whereas he, looking upon the adventure as a comic one, only laughed, I, who found it too tragic, shuddered with indignation.

On Tuesday morning I went to Muran to tell Tonine to get a cold supper after my instructions, lay the table for two and get wax lights ready; and, having sent in several bottles of wine, I bade her keep to the room occupied by the old landlord and not come out till the people who were coming in the evening were gone. She promised to do so and asked no questions. After leaving her, I went to the convent parlour and asked to see M— M—. Not expecting to see me, she asked me why I had not gone to the pageant of the Bucentoro, which, the weather being favourable, would set out on this day. I do not know what I answered, but I know that she found my words little to the purpose. I came at last to the important point and told her I was going to ask a favour of her on which my peace of mind depended, but which she must grant blindly without asking any questions.

"Tell me what I am to do, sweetheart," said she, "and be sure I will refuse nothing which may be in my power."

"I shall be here this evening an hour after sunset and ask for you at this grating; come. I shall be with another man, to whom I beg of you to say a few words of politeness; you can then leave us. Let us find some pretext to justify the unseasonable hour."

"I will do what you ask, but you cannot imagine how troublesome it is in a convent, for at six o'clock the parlours are shut up and the keys are taken to the abbess's room. However, as you want me for only five minutes, I will tell the abbess that I am expecting a letter from my brother and that it can be sent to me on this evening only. You must give me a letter, that the nun who will be with me may be able to say that I have not been guilty of deception."

"You will not come alone, then?"

"I should not dare even to ask for such a privilege."

"Very good, but try to come with some old nun who is short-sighted."

"I will keep the light in the background."

"Pray do not do so, my beloved; on the contrary, place it so that you may be distinctly seen."

"All this is very strange, but I have promised passive obedience, and I will come down with two lights. May I hope that you will explain this riddle to me at your next interview?"

"By to-morrow, at latest, you shall know the whole story."

"My curiosity will prevent me from sleeping."

"Not so, dear heart; sleep peacefully and be sure of my gratitude."

The reader will think that after this conversation my heart was perfectly at rest; but how far was I from resting! I returned to Venice, tortured lest I should be told in the evening at the door of the cathedral, where we were to meet, that the nun had been obliged to put off her appointment. If that had happened, I should not have exactly suspected M— M—, but the ambassador would have thought that I had caused the scheme to miscarry. It is certain that in that case

I should not have taken my man to the parlour, but should have gone there sadly by myself.

I passed the whole day in these torments, thinking it would never come to an end, and in the evening I put a letter in my pocket and went to my post at the hour agreed upon.

Fortunately, Murray kept the appointment exactly.

"Is the nun there?" said I, as soon as he was near me.

"Yes, my dear fellow. We will go, if you like, to the parlour; but you will find that we shall be told she is ill or engaged. If you like, the bet shall be off!"

"God forbid, my dear fellow! I cling to that hundred ducats. Let us begone."

We presented ourselves at the wicket, and I asked for M— M—, and the doorkeeper made me breathe again by saying that I was expected. I entered the parlour with my English friend and saw that it was lighted by four candles. I cannot recall those moments without being in love with life. I took note not only of my noble mistress's innocence, but also of the quickness of her wit. Murray remained serious, without a smile on his face. Full of grace and beauty, M— M— came into the room with a lay sister, each of them holding a candlestick. She paid me a compliment in good French; I gave her the letter, and, looking at the address and the seal, she put it in her pocket. After thanking me and saying she would reply in due course, she turned towards my companion. "I shall, perhaps, make you lose the first act of the opera," said she.

"The pleasure of seeing you, madam, is worth all the operas in the world."

"You are English, I think?"

"Yes, madame."

"The English are now the greatest people in the world because they are free and powerful. Gentlemen, I wish you a very good evening."

I had never seen M— M— looking so beautiful as then, and I went out of the parlour ablaze with love and glad as I had never been before. I walked with long strides towards my casino, without taking notice of the ambassador, who did not hurry to follow me; I waited for him at my door.

"Well," said I, "are you convinced now that you have been cheated?"

"Be quiet, we have time enough to talk about that. Let us go upstairs."

"Shall I come?"

"Do. What do you think I could do by myself for four hours with that creature who is waiting for me? We will amuse ourselves with her."

"Had we not better turn her out?"

"No; her master is coming for her at two o'clock in the morning. She would go and warn him, and he would escape my vengeance. We will throw them both out of the window."

"Be moderate, for M— M—'s honour depends on the secrecy we

observe. Let us go upstairs. We shall have some fun. I should like to see the hussy."

Murray was the first to enter the room. As soon as the girl saw me, she threw her handkerchief over her face and told the ambassador that such behaviour was unworthy of him. He made no answer. She was not so tall as M— M—, and she spoke bad French. Her cloak and mask were on the bed, but she was dressed as a nun. As I wanted to see her face, I politely asked her to do me the favour of showing it.

"I don't know you," said she. "Who are you?"

"You are in my house and don't know who I am?"

"I am in your house because I have been betrayed. I did not think that I should have to do with a scoundrel."

At this word Murray commanded her to be silent, calling her by the name of her honourable business; and the slut got up to take her cloak, saying she would go. Murray pushed her back and told her she would have to wait for her worthy friend, warning her to make no noise if she wanted to keep out of prison.

"Put me in prison!"

With this she directed her hand towards the bosom of her dress, but I rushed forward and seized one hand while Murray mastered the other. We pushed her back on a chair while we possessed ourselves of the pistols she carried in her pockets.

Murray tore away the front of her holy habit, and I extracted a stiletto eight inches long, the false nun weeping bitterly all the time.

"Will you hold your tongue and keep quiet till Capsucefalo comes," said the ambassador, "or go to prison?"

"If I keep quiet, what will become of me?"

"I promise to let you go."

"With him?"

"Perhaps."

"Very well, then, I will keep quiet."

"Have you got any more weapons?"

Hereupon the slut took off her habit and her petticoat, and, if we had allowed her, she would have soon been in a state of nature, no doubt in the expectation of our passions granting what our reason refused.

I was much astonished to find in her only a false resemblance to M— M—. I remarked as much to the ambassador, who agreed with me but made me confess that most men, prepossessed with the idea that they were going to see M— M—, would have fallen into the same trap. In fact, the longing to possess oneself of a nun who has renounced all the pleasures of the world, and especially that of cohabitation with the other sex, is the very apple of Eve and is more delightful from the very difficulty of penetrating the convent grating.

Few of my readers will fail to testify that the sweetest pleasures are those which are hardest to be won and that the prize for which one would risk one's life would often pass unnoticed if it were freely offered, without difficulty or hazard.

In the following chapter, dear reader, you will see the end of this practical adventure. In the meantime, let us take a little breath.

CHAPTER 47

"How did you make this nice acquaintance?" I asked the ambassador.

"Six months ago," he replied, "while standing at the convent gate with Mr. Smith, our consul, in whose company I had been to see some ceremony or other, I remarked to him, as we were talking over some nuns we had noticed, 'I would gladly give five hundred sequins for a few hours of Sister M— M—'s company.' Count Capsucefalo heard what I said but made no remark. Mr. Smith answered that one could see her only at the grating, as did the ambassador of France, who often came to visit her. Capsucefalo called on me the next morning and said that, if I had spoken in good faith, he was sure he could get me a night with the nun in whatever place I liked if she could count on my secrecy. 'I have just been speaking to her,' said he, 'and, on my mentioning your name, she said she had noticed you with Mr. Smith and vowed she would sup with you more for love than money. I,' said the rascal, 'am the only man she trusts and I take her to the French ambassador's casino in Venice whenever she wants to go there. You need not be afraid of being cheated, as you will give the money to her personally when you have possessed yourself of her.' With this he took her portrait from his pocket and showed it to me; and here it is. I bought it of him two days after I believed myself to have spent a night with the charming nun and a fortnight after our conversation. This beauty here came masked in a nun's habit, and I was fool enough to think I had got a treasure. I am vexed with myself for not having suspected the cheat—at all events, when I saw her hair, as I know that nuns' hair should be cut short. But, when I said something about it to the hussy, she told me they were allowed to keep their hair under their caps, and I was weak enough to believe her."

I knew that on this particular Murray had not been deceived, but I did not feel compelled to tell him so then and there.

I held the portrait Murray had given me in my hand, and compared it with the face before me. In the portrait the breast was bare, and, as I was remarking that painters did those parts as best they could, the impudent wench seized the opportunity to show me that the miniature was faithful to nature. I turned my back upon her with an expression of contempt which would have mortified her, if these creatures were ever capable of shame. As we talked things over, I could not help laughing at the axiom, "Things which are equal to the same thing are equal to each other," for the miniature was like M— M— and like the courtesan, and yet the two women were not like each other. Murray agreed with me, and we spent an hour in a philosophical discussion on the matter. As the false M— M— was named Innocente, we expressed a wish to know how her name agreed with

her profession and how the knave had induced her to play the part she had taken; and she told us the following story:

"I have known Count Capsucefalo for two years and have found him useful, for, although he has given me no money, he has made me profit largely through the people he has introduced to me. About the end of last autumn he came to me one day and said that, if I could make up as a nun with some clothes he would get me and in that character pass a night with an Englishman, I should be the better by five hundred sequins. 'You need not be afraid of anything,' said he, 'as I myself will take you to the casino where the dupe will be awaiting you, and I will come and take you back to your imaginary convent towards the end of the night.' He showed me how I must behave and told me what to reply if my lover asked any questions about the discipline of the convent.

"I liked the plot, gentlemen, and told him I was ready to carry it out. And be pleased to consider that there are not many women of my profession who would hesitate over a chance of getting five hundred sequins. Finding the scheme both agreeable and profitable, I promised to play my part with the greatest skill. The bargain was struck, and he gave me full instructions as to my dialogue. He told me that the Englishman could talk only about my convent and any lovers I might have had; that on the latter point I was to cut him short and answer with a laugh that I did not know what he was talking about and even tell him that I was a nun in appearance only, and that in the course of toying I might let him see my hair. 'That,' said Capsucefalo, 'won't prevent him from thinking you a nun—yes, and the very nun he is amorous of—for he will have made up his mind that you cannot possibly be anyone else.' Seizing the point of the jest, I did not take the trouble to find out the name of the nun I was to represent nor the convent whence I was to come; the only thing in my head was the five hundred sequins. So little have I troubled about aught else that, though I passed a delicious night with you and found you rather worthy of being paid for than paying, I have not ascertained who and what you are, and I don't know at this moment to whom I am speaking. You know what a night I had; I have told you it was delicious, and I was happy in the idea that I was going to have another. You have found everything out. I am sorry, but I am not afraid of anything, since I may put on any disguise I like and can't prevent my lovers taking me for a saint if they like to do so. You found weapons in my possession, but everyone is allowed to bear arms in self-defence. I plead not guilty on all counts."

"Do you know me?" said I.

"No, but I have often seen you passing under my window. I live at St. Roch, near the bridge."

The way in which the woman told her yarn convinced us that she was an adept in the science of prostitution, but we thought Capsucefalo, in spite of the count, worthy of the pillory. The girl was about ten years older than M— M—, she was pretty but light-com-

plexioned, while my beautiful nun had fine dark brown hair and was at least three inches taller.

After twelve o'clock we sat down to supper and did honour to the excellent meal which my dear Antoinette had prepared for us. We were cruel enough to leave the poor wretch without offering her so much as a glass of wine, but we thought it our duty.

While we were talking, the jolly Englishman made some witty comments on my eagerness to convince him that he had not enjoyed M— M—'s favours.

"I can't believe," said he, "that you have shown so much interest without being in love with the divine nun."

I answered by saying that, if I were her lover, I was much to be pitied in being condemned to go to the parlour and no farther.

"I would gladly give a hundred guineas a month," said he, "to have the privilege of visiting her at the grating."

So saying he gave me my hundred sequins, complimenting me on my success, and I slipped them forthwith into my pocket.

At two o'clock in the morning we heard a soft knock on the street door.

"Here is our friend," I said, "be discreet, and you will see that he will make a full confession."

He came in and saw Murray and the lady, but did not discover that a third party was present till he heard the ante-room door being locked. He turned round and saw me and, as he knew me, merely said, without losing countenance, "Ah, you are here; you know, of course, that the secret must be kept?"

Murray laughed and calmly asked him to be seated, and he inquired, with the lady's pistols in his hands, where he was going to take her before daybreak.

"Home."

"I think you may be mistaken, as it is very possible that, when you leave this place, you will both of you be provided with a bed in prison."

"No, I am not afraid of that happening; the thing would make too much noise, and the laugh would not be on your side. Come," said he to his mate, "put on your cloak and let us be off."

The ambassador, who, like an Englishman, kept quite cool the whole time, poured him out a glass of Chambertin, and the blackguard drank his health. Murray, seeing he had on a fine ring set with brilliants, praised it and, showing some curiosity to see it more closely, drew it off the fellow's finger, examined it, found it without flaw and asked how much it was worth. Capsucefalo, a little taken aback, said it cost him four hundred sequins.

"I will hold it as a pledge for that sum," said the ambassador, putting the ring into his pocket. The other looked chopfallen, and Murray, laughing at his retiring manners, told the girl to put on her cloak and pack off with her worthy acolyte. She did so directly, and with a low bow they disappeared.

"Farewell, nun procurer!" said the ambassador, but the count made no answer.

As soon as they were gone, I thanked Murray warmly for the moderation he had shown, as a scandal would only have injured three innocent people.

"Be sure," said he, "that the guilty parties shall be punished without anyone's knowing the reason."

I then made Tonine come upstairs, and my English friend offered her a glass of wine which she declined with much modesty and politeness. Murray looked at her with flaming glances and left after giving me his heartiest thanks. Poor little Tonine had been resigned and obedient for many hours, and she had good cause to think I had been unfaithful to her; however, I gave her the most unmistakable proofs of my fidelity. We stayed in bed for six hours and rose happy in the morning.

After dinner I hurried off to my noble M— M— and told her the whole story. She listened eagerly, her various feelings flitting across her face. Fear, anger, wrath, approval of my method of clearing up my natural suspicions, joy at discovering me still her lover—all were depicted in succession in her glance, in the play of her features and in the red and white which followed one another on her cheeks and forehead. She was delighted to hear that the masker who was with me in the parlour was the English ambassador, but she became nobly disdainful when I told her that he would gladly give a hundred guineas a month for the pleasure of visiting her in the parlour. She was angry with him for fancying that she had been in his power and for finding a likeness between her and a portrait, when, so she said, there was no likeness at all—I had given her the portrait. She added, with a shrewd smile, that she was sure I had not let my little maid see the false nun, as she might have been mistaken.

"You know, do you, that I have a young servant?"

"Yes, and a pretty one, too. She is Laura's daughter, and, if you love her, I am very glad, and so is C— C—. I hope you will let me have a sight of her. C— C— has seen her before."

As I saw that she knew too much for me to be able to deceive her, I took my cue directly and told her in detail the history of my amours. She showed her satisfaction too openly not to be sincere. Before I left her, she said her honour obliged her to get Capsucefalo assassinated, for the wretch had wronged her beyond pardon. By way of quieting her, I promised that, if the ambassador did not rid us of him within the week, I would charge myself with the execution of our common vengeance.

About this time died Bragadin the procurator, brother of my patron, leaving M. de Bragadin sufficiently well off. However, as the family threatened to become extinct, he desired a woman who had been his mistress, and by whom he had had a natural son, to become his wife. By this marriage the son would have become legitimate and the family

renewed again. The College of Cardinals would have recognised the wife for a small fee, and all would have gone admirably.

The woman wrote to me, asking me to call on her; and I was going to, curious to know what a woman whom I did not know from Adam could want with me, when I received a summons from M. de Bragadin. He begged me to ask *Paralis* if he ought to follow De la Haye's advice in a matter he had promised not to confide to me, but of which the oracle must be informed. The oracle, naturally opposed to the Jesuit, told him to consult his own feelings and nothing else. After this I went to the lady.

She began by telling me the whole story. She introduced her son to me and told me that, if the marriage could be performed, a deed would be delivered in my favour by which, at the death of M. de Bragadin, I should become entitled to an estate worth five thousand crowns per annum.

As I guessed without much trouble that this was the same matter which De la Haye had proposed to M. de Bragadin, I answered without hesitation that, since De la Haye was before me, I could do nothing and thereupon made her my bow.

I could not help wondering at this Jesuit's continually intriguing to marry off my old friends without my knowledge. Two years before, if I had not set my face against it, he would have married off M. Dan-dolo. I cared not a whit whether the family of Bragadin became extinct or not, but I did care for the life of my benefactor and was quite sure that marriage would shorten it by many years; he was already sixty-three and had recovered from a serious apoplectic stroke.

I went to dine with Lady Murray (Englishwomen who are daughters of lords keep the title), and after dinner the ambassador told me that he had told M. Cavalli the whole story of the false nun and that the secretary had informed him the evening before that everything had been done to his liking; Count Capsucefalo had been sent to Cephalonia, his native country, with the order never to return to Venice, and the courtesan had disappeared.

The fine part, or rather the fearful part, about these sentences is that no one ever knows the reason why or wherefore and the lot may fall on the innocent as well as the guilty. M— M— was delighted with the outcome, and I was more pleased than she, for I should have been sorry to have been obliged to soil my hands with the blood of that rascally count.

There are seasons in the life of men which may be called *fasti* and *nefasti*; I have proved this often in my long career and on the strength of the rubs and struggles I have had to encounter. I am able, as well as any man, to verify the truth of this axiom. I had just experienced a run of luck. Fortune had befriended me at play, I had been happy in the society of men, and from love I had nothing to ask; but now the reverse of the medal began to appear. Love was still kind, but Fortune had quite left me, and you will soon see, reader, that men used me no better than the blind goddess. Nevertheless, since one's

fate has phases as well as the moon, good follows evil as disasters succeed happiness.

I still played on the martingale, but with such bad luck that I was soon left without a sequin. As I shared my property with M— M—, I was obliged to tell her of my losses, and it was at her request that I sold all her diamonds, losing what I got for them; she had now only five hundred sequins by her. There was no more talk of her escaping from the convent, for we had nothing to live on! I still gamed, but for small stakes, waiting for the slow return of good luck.

One day the English ambassador, after giving me a supper at his casino with the celebrated Fanny Murray, asked me to let him sup at my casino at Muran, which I now kept up only for the sake of Tonine. I granted him the favour but did not imitate his generosity. He found my little mistress smiling and polite but always keeping within the bounds of decency, from which he would have very willingly excused her. The next morning he wrote me as follows:

"I am madly in love with Tonine. If you care to hand her over to me, I will make the following provision for her: I will set her up in a suitable lodging, which I will furnish throughout and which I will give to her with all its contents, provided I may visit her whenever I please and that she gives me all the rights of a fortunate lover. I will give her a maid, a cook and thirty sequins a month, as provision for two people, without reckoning the wine, which I will procure myself. Besides this I will give her a life income of two hundred crowns per annum, over which she will have full control after living with me for a year. I give you a week to send your answer."

I replied immediately that I would let him know in three days whether his proposal was accepted, for Tonine had a mother of whom she was fond and would possibly not care to do anything without her consent. I also informed him that from all appearances the girl was with child.

The business was an important one for Tonine. I loved her but knew perfectly well that we could not pass the rest of our lives together, and I saw no prospect of being able to make her as good a provision as that offered by the ambassador. Consequently I had no doubts on the question, and the very same day I went to Muran and told her all.

"You wish to leave me, then," said she, in tears.

"I love you, dearest, and what I propose ought to convince you of my love."

"Not so; I cannot serve two masters."

"You will serve only your new lover, sweetheart. I beg of you to reflect that you will have a fine dowry, on the strength of which you may marry well; and that, however much I love you, I cannot possibly make so good a provision for you."

"Leave me to-day for tears and reflection and come to supper with me to-morrow."

I did not fail to keep the appointment.

"I think your English friend is a very pretty man," she said, "and,

when he speaks in the Venetian dialect, it makes me die with laughter. If my mother agrees, I might, perhaps, force myself to love him. Supposing we did not agree, we could part at the end of a year, and I should be the richer by an income of two hundred crowns."

"I am charmed with the sense of your arguments; speak about it to your mother."

"I daren't, sweetheart; this kind of thing is too delicate to be discussed between a mother and her daughter; speak to her yourself."

"I will, indeed."

Laura, whom I had not seen since she had given me her daughter, asked for no time to think it over but, full of glee, told me that now her daughter would be able to soothe her declining years and that she would leave Muran, of which she was tired. She showed me a hundred and thirty sequins which Tonine had gained in my service and placed in her hands.

Barberine, Tonine's younger sister, came to kiss my hand. I thought her charming and gave her all the silver in my pocket. I then left, telling Laura that I should expect her at my house. She soon followed me and gave her child a mother's blessing, telling her that she and her family could go and live in Venice for sixty sous a day. Tonine embraced her and told her that she should have it.

This important affair having been managed to everybody's satisfaction, I went to see M— M—, who came into the parlour with C— C—, whom I found looking sad, though prettier than ever. She was melancholy, but none the less tender. She could not stay for more than a quarter of an hour for fear of being seen, as she was forbidden ever to go into the parlour. I told M— M— the story of Tonine, who was going to live with Murray in Venice; she was sorry to hear it, "for," she said, "now that you have no longer any attraction at Muran, I shall see you less than ever." I promised to come and see her often, but vain promises! The time was near which parted us forever.

The same evening I went to tell the good news to my friend Murray. He was in a transport of joy and begged me to come and sup with him at his casino the day after next and to bring the girl with me, that the surrender might be made in form. I did not fail him, for, once the matter was decided, I longed to bring it to an end. In my presence he assigned to her the yearly income for her life of two hundred Venetian ducats, and by a second deed he gave her all the contents of the house with which he was going to provide her, provided always that she lived with him for a year. He allowed her to receive me as a friend, also to receive her mother and sisters, and she was free to go and see them when she would. Tonine threw her arms about his neck and assured him that she would endeavour to please him to the utmost of her ability. "I will see him," said she, pointing to me, "but only as a friend; he shall have nothing more from me." Throughout this truly affecting scene she kept back her tears, but I could not conceal mine. Murray was happy, but I was not long a witness of his good fortune, the reason of which I will explain a little later.

Three days afterwards Laura came to me, told me that she was living in Venice and asked me to take her to her daughter's. I owed this woman too much to refuse her, and I took her there forthwith. Tonine gave thanks to God and also to me, and her mother took up the song, for they were not quite sure whether they were more indebted to God or to me. Tonine was eloquent in her praise of Murray and made no complaint at my not having come to see her, at which I was glad. As I was going, Laura asked me to take her back in my gondola, and, as we had to pass by the house in which she lived, she begged me to come in for a moment, and I could not hurt her feelings by refusing. I owe it to my honour to remark here that I was thus polite without thinking that I should see Barberine again.

This girl, as pretty as her sister though in another style, began by awakening my curiosity, a weakness which usually renders the profligate man inconstant. If all women were to have the same features, the same disposition and the same manners, men would not only never be inconstant but would never be in love. Under that state of things one would choose a wife by instinct and keep to her till death, but our world would then be under a different system to the present one. Novelty is the master of our soul. We know that what we do not see is very nearly the same as what we have seen, but we are curious, we like to be quite sure, and, to attain our ends, we give ourselves as much trouble as if we were certain of finding some prize beyond compare.

Barberine, who looked upon me as an old friend (for her mother had accustomed her to kiss my hand whenever I went there), who had undressed more than once in my presence without troubling about me, who knew I had made her sister's fortune and the family fortune as well, and thought herself prettier than Tonine because her skin was fairer and because she had fine black eyes, desiring to take her sister's place, I knew that to succeed she must take me by storm. Her common sense told her that, as I hardly ever came to the house, I should not be likely to become amorous of her unless she won me by storm; and to this end she showed the utmost complaisance when she had the chance, so that I won her without any difficulty. All this reasoning came from her own head, for I am sure her mother gave her no instructions. Laura was a mother of a kind common the world over, but especially in Italy. She was willing to take advantage of the earnings of her daughters, but she would never have induced them to take the path of evil. There her virtue stopped short.

After I had inspected her two rooms and her little kitchen and had admired the cleanness which shone all around, Barberine asked me if I would like to see their small garden.

"With pleasure," I replied, "for a garden is a rarity in Venice."

Her mother told her to give me some figs if there were any ripe ones. The garden consisted of about thirty square feet and grew only salad herbs and a fine fig-tree. It had not a good crop, and I told her I could not see any figs.

"I can see some at the top," said Barberine, "and I will gather them if you will hold me the ladder."

"Yes, climb away; I will hold it quite firmly."

She stepped up lightly, and, stretching out an arm to get at some figs to one side of her, she put her body off its balance, holding on to the ladder with the other hand. As if she could not reach the fruit, she put her foot on a high branch and showed me the most seductive picture. I was in an ecstasy, and Barberine, who saw it, did not hurry herself. At last I helped her to come down, took her within my arms and, already her captive, pressed her amorously to my heart, printing on her lips a fiery kiss, which she gave me back with as much ardour.

"Will you give me what I have caught, dearest?"

"My mother is going to Muran to-morrow, and she will stay there all the day; if you come, there is nothing I will refuse you."

When speech like this proceeds from a mouth still innocent, the man to whom it is addressed ought to be happy, for desires are but pain and torment and enjoyment is sweet because it delivers us from them. This shows that those who prefer a little resistance to an easy conquest are in the wrong; but a too easy conquest often points to a depraved nature, and this men do not like, however depraved they themselves may be.

We returned to the house, and I gave Barberine a tender kiss before Laura's eyes, telling her that she had a very jewel in her daughter, a compliment which made her face light up with pleasure. I gave the dear girl ten sequins and went away congratulating myself but cursing my luck at not being able to make as good provision for Barberine as Murray had made for her sister. Tonine had told me that for manners' sake I should sup once with her. I went the same evening and found Righelini and Murray there. The supper was delicious, and I was delighted with the excellent understanding the two lovers had already come to. I complimented the ambassador on the loss of one of his tastes, and he told me he should be very sorry at such a loss, as it would warn him of his declining powers.

"But," said I, "you used to like to perform the mysterious sacrifice of Love without a veil."

"It was not I but Ancilla who liked it, and, as I preferred pleasing her to pleasing myself, I gave in to her taste without any difficulty."

"I am delighted with your answer, as I confess it would cost me something to be the witness of your exploits with Tonine."

Having casually remarked that I had no longer a house in Muran, Righelini told me that, if I liked, he could get me a delightful house at a low rent on the Tondamente Nuovo.

As this quarter, facing north and as agreeable in summer as disagreeable in winter, was opposite to Muran, where I should have to go twice a week, I told the doctor I should be glad to look at the house.

I took leave of the rich and fortunate ambassador at midnight and, before passing the day with my new prize, went to sleep, so as to be fresh and capable of running a good course.

I went to Barberine at an early hour, and, as soon as she saw me, she said, "My mother will not be back till the evening, and my brother will take his dinner at the school. Here is a fowl, a ham, some cheese and two bottles of Scopol wine. We will take our mess whenever you like."

"You astonish me, sweetheart, for how did you manage to get such a good dinner?"

"We owe it to my mother, so to her be the praise."

"You have told her, then, what we are going to do?"

"No, not I, for I know nothing about it; but I told her you were coming to see me, and at the same time I gave her the ten sequins."

"And what did your mother say?"

"She said she wouldn't be sorry if you were to love me as you loved my sister."

"I love you better, though I love her well."

"You love her? Why did you leave her, then?"

"I have not left her, for we supped together yesterday evening, but we no longer live together as lovers, that is all. I have yielded her up to a rich friend of mine, who has made her fortune."

"That is well, though I don't understand much about these affairs. I hope you will tell Tonine that I have taken her place, and I should be very pleased if you would let her know that you are quite sure you are my first lover."

"And supposing the news vexes her?"

"So much the better. Will you do it for me? It's the first favour I have asked of you."

"I promise to do so."

After this rapid dialogue we took breakfast and then, perfectly agreed, went to bed, rather as if we were about to sacrifice to Hymen than to Love.

We got up for dinner and, after we had refreshed ourselves, mounted once more the altar of Love, where we remained till the evening. Laura found us dressed and well pleased with each other on her return. I made Barberine another present of twenty sequins, I swore to love her always and went on my way. At the time I certainly meant to keep to my oath, but that which destiny had in store for me could not be reconciled with these promises which welled forth from my soul in a moment of excitement.

The next morning Righelini took me to see the lodging he had spoken about. I liked it and took it on the spot, paying the first quarter in advance. The house belonged to a widow with two daughters, the elder of whom had just been blooded. Righelini was her doctor and had treated her for nine months without success. As he was going to pay her a visit, I went in with him and found myself in a presence of a fine waxen statue. Surprise drew from me these words, "She is pretty, but the sculptor should give her some colour."

Whereupon the statue smiled in a manner which would have been charming if her lips had but been red.

"Her pallor," said Righelini, "will not astonish you when I tell you she has just been blooded for the hundred-and-fourth time."

I gave a very natural gesture of surprise.

This fine girl had attained the age of eighteen years without experiencing the monthly relief afforded by nature, the result being that she felt a deathly faintness three or four times a week, and the only relief was to open the vein.

"I want to send her to the country," said the doctor, "where pure and wholesome air and, above all, more exercise will do her more good than all the drugs in the world."

After I had been told that my bed would be made ready by the evening, I went away with Righelini, who told me that the only cure for the girl would be a good strong lover.

"But my dear doctor," said I, "can't you make your own prescription?"

"That would be too risky a game, for I might find myself compelled to marry her, and I hate marriage like the devil."

Though I was no better inclined towards marriage than the doctor, I was too near the fire not to get burnt, and the reader will see in the next chapter how I performed the miraculous cure of bringing the colours of health into the cheeks of this pallid beauty.

CHAPTER 48

AFTER leaving Dr. Righelini I went to sup with M. de Bragadin, and gave that generous and worthy old man a happy evening. This was always the case; I made him and his two good friends happy whenever I took meals with them.

Leaving them at an early hour, I went to my lodging and was greatly surprised to find my bedroom balcony occupied. A young lady of an exquisite figure rose as soon as she saw me and gracefully asked my pardon for the liberty she had taken.

"I am," she said, "the statue you saw this morning. We do not light the candles in the evening for fear of attracting the gnats, but, when you want to go to bed, we will shut the door and go away. I beg to introduce you to my younger sister; my mother has gone to bed."

I answered her to the effect that the balcony was always at her service and that, since it was still early, I begged their permission to put on my dressing-gown and keep them company. Her conversation was charming; she made me spend two most delightful hours and did not leave me till twelve o'clock. Her younger sister lighted me a candle, and, as they went, they wished me good-night.

I lay down full of this pretty girl and could not believe that she was really ill. She spoke to the point, she was cheerful, clever and full of spirits. I could not understand how it came to pass that she had not been already cured in a town like Venice if her cure was

really only to be effected in the manner described by Dr. Righelini; for, in spite of her pallor, she seemed to me quite fair enough to charm a lover, and I believed her to be spirited enough to determine to take the most agreeable medicine a doctor can prescribe.

In the morning I rang the bell as I was getting up, and the younger sister came into my room and said that, as they kept no servant, she had come to do what I wanted. I did not care to have a servant when I was not at M. de Bragadin's, as I found myself more at liberty to do what I liked. After she had done me some small services, I asked her how her sister was.

"Very well," said she, "for her pale complexion is not an illness, and she suffers only when her breath fails her. She has a very good appetite and sleeps as well as I do."

"Whom do I hear playing the violin?"

"It's the dancing-master giving my sister a lesson."

I hurried over my dressing that I might see her, and I found her charming, though her old dancing-master allowed her to turn in her toes. All that this young and beautiful girl wanted was the Promethean spark, the colour of life; her whiteness was too like snow and was distressing to look at.

The dancing-master begged me to dance a minuet with his pupil, and I assented, asking him to play *larghissimo*. "The signorina would find it too tiring," said he; but she hastened to answer that she did not feel weak and would like to dance thus. She danced very well, but, when we had done, she was obliged to throw herself in a chair. "In future, my dear master," said she, "I will dance only like that, for I think the rapid motion will do me good."

When the master was gone, I told her that her lessons were too short and her master was letting her get into bad habits. I then set her feet, her shoulders and her arms in the proper manner. I taught her how to give her hand gracefully, to bend her knees in time; in fine, I gave her a regular lesson for an hour, and, seeing that she was getting rather tired, I begged her to sit down, and I went out to pay a visit to M— M—.

I found her very sad, for C— C—'s father had died and they had taken her out of the convent to marry her to a lawyer. Before leaving, C— C— had left a letter for me, in which she said that, if I would promise to marry her at some time suitable to myself, she would wait for me and refuse all other offers. I answered her straightforwardly that I had no property and no prospects, that I left her free, advising her not to refuse any offer which might be to her advantage.

In spite of this dismissal, C— C— did not marry N— till after my flight from The Leads, when nobody expected to see me again in Venice. I did not see her for nineteen years, and then I was grieved to find her a widow and poorly off. If I went to Venice now, I should not marry her, for at my age marriage is an absurdity, but I would share with her my little all and live with her as with a dear sister.

When I hear women talking about the bad faith and inconstancy

of men and maintaining that, when men make promises of eternal constancy, they are always deceivers, I confess that they are right and I join in their complaints. Still it cannot be helped, for the promises of lovers are dictated by the heart and consequently the lamentations of women only make me want to laugh. Alas! we love without heeding reason, and we cease to love in the same manner.

About this time I received a letter from the Abbé de Bernis, who wrote also to M— M—. He told me that I ought to do my utmost to make our nun take a reasonable view of things, dwelling on the risks I should run in carrying her off and bringing her to Paris, where all his influence would be of no avail to obtain for us that safety so indispensable to happiness. I saw M— M—; we showed each other our letters, she had some bitter tears, and her grief pierced me to the heart. I still had a great love for her, in spite of my daily infidelities, and, when I thought of those moments in which I had seen her given over to voluptuousness, I could not help pitying her fate as I thought of the days of despair in store for her. But soon after this an event happened which gave rise to some wholesome reflections. One day, when I had come to see her, she said:

"They have just been burying a nun who died of consumption the day before yesterday in the odour of sanctity. She was called Maria Concetta. She knew you and told C— C— your name when you used to come to mass on feast days. C— C— begged her to be discreet, but the nun told her you were a dangerous man, whose presence should be shunned by a young girl. C— C— told me all this after the mask of Pierrot."

"What was this saint's name when she was in the world?"

"Martha S—."

"I know her."

I then told M— M— the whole history of my loves with Nanette and Marton, ending with the letter she wrote me in which she said that she owed me, indirectly, that eternal salvation to which she hoped to attain.

In eight or ten days my conversations with my hostess's daughter—conversations which took place on the balcony and generally lasted till midnight—and the lesson I gave her every morning produced the inevitable and natural results: firstly, that she no longer complained of her breath failing, and, secondly, that I fell in love with her. Nature's cure had not yet relieved her, but she no longer needed to be let blood. Righelini came to visit her as usual and, seeing that she was better, prophesied that nature's remedy, without which only art could keep her alive, would make all right before the autumn. Her mother looked upon me as an angel sent by God to cure her daughter, who for her part showed me that gratitude which with women is the first step towards love. I had made her dismiss her old dancing-master, and I had taught her to dance with extreme grace.

At the end of these ten or twelve days, just as I was going to give her her lesson, her breath failed instantaneously, and she fell back

into my arms like a dead woman. I was alarmed, but her mother, who had become accustomed to see her thus, sent for the surgeon, and her sister unlaced her. I was enchanted with her exquisite bosom, which needed no colouring to make it more beautiful. I covered it up, saying that the surgeon would make a false stroke if he were to see her thus uncovered; but, feeling that I laid my hand upon her with delight, she gently repulsed me, looking at me with a languishing gaze which made the deepest impression on me.

The surgeon came and bled her in the arm, and almost instantaneously she recovered full consciousness. At most, only four ounces of blood were taken from her, and her mother, telling me that this was the utmost extent to which she was blooded, I saw it was no such matter for wonder as Righelini represented it, for, being blooded twice a week, she lost three pounds of blood a month, which she would have done naturally if the vessels had not been obstructed.

The surgeon had hardly gone out of the door when to my astonishment she told me that, if I would wait for her a moment, she would come back and begin her dancing. This she did and danced as if there had been nothing the matter.

Her bosom, on which two of my senses were qualified to give evidence, was the last stroke and made me madly in love with her. I returned to the house in the evening, and found her in her room with the sister. She told me she was expecting her godfather, who was an intimate friend of her father's and had come every evening to spend an hour with her for the last eighteen years.

"How old is he?"

"He is over fifty."

"Is he a married man?"

"Yes, his name is Count S—. He is as fond of me as a father would be, and his affection has continued the same since my childhood. Even his wife comes to see me sometimes and to ask me to dinner. Next autumn I am going into the country with her, and I hope the fresh air will do me good. My godfather knows you are staying with us and is satisfied. He does not know you, but, if you like, you can make his acquaintance."

I was glad to hear all this, as I gained a good deal of useful information without having to ask any awkward questions. The friendship of this Greek looked very like love. He was the husband of Countess S—, who had taken me to the convent at Muran two years before.

I found the count a very polite man. He thanked me in a paternal manner for my kindness to his daughter and begged me to do him the honour of dining with him on the following day, telling me he would introduce me to his wife. I accepted his invitation with pleasure, for I was fond of dramatic situations and my meeting with the countess promised to be an exciting one. This invitation bespoke the courteous gentleman, and I charmed my pretty pupil by singing his praises after he had gone.

"My godfather," said she, "is in possession of all the necessary

documents for withdrawing from the house of Persico our family fortune, which amounts to forty thousand crowns. A quarter of this sum belongs to me, and my mother has promised my sister and myself to share her dowry between us."

I concluded from this that she would bring her husband fifteen thousand Venetian ducats.

I guessed that she was appealing to me with her fortune and wished to make me in love with her by showing herself chary of her favours; for, whenever I allowed myself any small liberties, she checked me with words of remonstrance to which I could find no answer. I determined to make her pursue another course.

Next day I took her with me to her godfather's without telling her I knew the countess. I fancied the lady would pretend not to know me, but I was wrong, as she welcomed me in the handsomest manner, as if I were an old friend. This, no doubt, was a surprise for the count, but he was too much a man of the world to show any astonishment. He asked her when she had made my acquaintance, and she, like a woman of experience, answered without the slightest hesitation that we had seen each other two years before at Mira. The matter was settled, and we spent a very pleasant day.

Towards evening I took the young lady in my gondola back to the house, but, wishing to shorten the journey, I allowed myself to indulge in a few caresses. I was hurt at being responded to by reproaches, and for that reason, as soon as she had set foot on her own doorstep, instead of getting out, I went to Tonine's house and spent nearly the whole night there with the ambassador, who came a little after me. Next day, as I did not get up till quite late, there was no dancing lesson, and, when I excused myself, she told me not to trouble any more about it. In the evening I sat on the balcony far into the night, but she did not come. Vexed at this air of indifference, I rose early in the morning and went out, not returning till nightfall. She was on the balcony, but, as she kept me at a respectful distance, I talked to her only on commonplace subjects. In the morning I was roused by a tremendous noise. I got up and, hurriedly putting on my dressing-gown, ran into her room to see what was the matter, only to find her dying. I had no need to feign an interest in her, for I felt the most tender concern. As it was at the beginning of July, it was extremely hot, and my fair invalid was covered only by a thin sheet. She could speak to me only with her eyes, but, though the lids were lowered, she looked upon me so lovingly! I asked her if she suffered from palpitations, and, laying my hand upon her heart, I pressed a fiery kiss upon her breast. This was the electric spark, for she gave a sigh which did her good. She had not strength to repulse the hand which I pressed amorously upon her heart, and, becoming bolder, I fastened my burning lips upon her languid mouth and warmed her with my breath. She made an effort to push me back and told me with her eyes, since she could not speak, how insulted she felt. I drew back my hand and at that moment the surgeon came. Hardly was the vein

opened when she drew a long breath, and by the time the operation was over she wished to get up. I entreated her to stay in bed, and her mother added her voice to mine; at last I persuaded her, telling her that I would not leave her for a second and would have my dinner by her bedside. She then put on a corset and asked her sister to draw a sarcenet coverlet over her, as her limbs could be seen as plainly as through a crêpe veil.

Having given orders for my dinner, I sat down by her bedside, burning with love, and, taking her hand and covering it with kisses, I told her I was sure she would get better if she would let herself love.

"Alas!" she said, "whom shall I love, not knowing whether I shall be loved in return?"

I did not leave this question unanswered, and, continuing the amorous discourse with animation, I won a sigh and a lovelorn glance. I put my hand on her knee, begging her to let me leave it there and promising to go no farther.

"Let me alone," she said, in a sentimental voice, drawing away, "'tis perchance the cause of my illness."

"No, sweetheart," I replied, "that cannot be." And my mouth stopped all her objections upon her lips.

I was enchanted, for I was now in a fair way and I saw the moment of bliss in the distance, feeling certain that I could effect a cure if the doctor was not mistaken. I spared her all indiscreet questions out of regard for her modesty; but I declared myself her lover, promising to ask nothing of her but what was necessary to feed the fire of my love. They sent me up a very good dinner, and she did justice to it; afterwards, saying that she was quite well, she got up, and I went away to dress for going out. I came back early in the evening and found her on my balcony. There, as I sat close to her, looking into her face, speaking by turns and language of the eyes and that of sighs, fixing my amorous gaze upon those charms which the moonlight rendered sweeter, I made her share in the fire which consumed me; and, as I pressed her amorously to my bosom, she completed my bliss with such warmth that I could easily see that she thought she was receiving a favour and not granting one.

Her sister came to tell her that it was growing late.

"Do you go to bed," she answered. "The fresh air is doing me good, and I want to enjoy it a little longer."

As soon as we were alone, we went to bed together as if we had been doing it for a whole year, and we passed a glorious night, I full of love and the desire of curing her, and she of tender and ardent voluptuousness. At daybreak she embraced me, her eyes dewy with bliss, and went to lie down in her own bed. I, like her, stood in need of rest, and on that day there was no talk of a dancing lesson. In spite of the fierce pleasure of enjoyment and the transports of this delightful girl, I did not for a moment lay prudence aside. We continued to pass such nights as these for three weeks, and I had the pleasure of seeing her thoroughly cured. I should doubtless have married her

if an event had not happened to me towards the end of the month of which I shall speak further on.

You will remember, dear reader, about a romance by the Abbé Chiari, a satirical romance which Mr. Murray had given me and in which I fared badly enough at the author's hands. I had small reason to be pleased with him, and I let him know my opinion in such wise that the abbé, who dreaded a caning, kept on his guard. About the same time I received an anonymous letter, the writer of which told me that I should be better occupied in taking care of myself than in thoughts of chastising the abbé, for I was threatened by an imminent danger. Anonymous letter-writers should be held in contempt, but one ought to know how, on occasion, to make the best of advice given in that way. I did nothing and made a great mistake.

About the same time a man named Manuzzi, a stone-setter for his first trade and also a spy, a vile agent of the State Inquisitors—a man of whom I knew nothing—found a way to make my acquaintance by offering to let me have diamonds on credit, and by this means he got the entry of my house. As he was looking at some books scattered here and there about the room, he stopped short at the manuscripts which were on magic. Enjoying, foolishly enough, his look of astonishment, I showed him the books which teach one how to summon the elementary spirits. My readers will, I hope, do me the favour to believe that I put no faith in these conjuring books, but I had them by me and used to amuse myself with them as one amuses oneself with the multitudinous follies which proceed from the heads of visionaries. A few days after the traitor came to see me and told me that a collector, whose name he might not tell me, was ready to give me a thousand sequins for my five books, but that he would like to examine them first to see if they were genuine. As he promised to let me have them back in twenty-four hours and not thinking much about the matter, I let him have them. He did not fail to bring them back the next day, telling me that the collector thought them forgeries. I found out, some years after, that he had taken them to the State Inquisitors, who thus discovered that I was a notable magician.

Everything that happened throughout this fatal month tended to my ruin, for Madame Memmo, mother of André, Bernard and Laurent Memmo, had taken it into her head that I had inclined her sons to atheistic opinions, and took counsel with the old knight Antony Mocenigo, M. de Bragadin's uncle, who was angry with me because, as he said, I had conspired to seduce his nephew. The matter was a serious one, and an *auto-da-fé* was very possible, as it came under the jurisdiction of the Holy Office—a kind of wild beast, with which it is not good to quarrel. Nevertheless, as there would be some difficulty in shutting me up in the ecclesiastical prisons of the Holy Office, it was determined to carry my case before the State Inquisitors, who took upon themselves the provisional duty of putting a watch upon my manner of living.

Mr. Antony Condulmer, who, as a friend of Abbé Chiari, was an

enemy of mine, was then an Inquisitor of State, and he took the opportunity of looking upon me in the light of a disturber of the peace of the commonwealth. A secretary of an embassy, whom I knew some years after, told me that a paid informer with two other witnesses (also, doubtless, in the pay of this grand tribunal) had declared that I was guilty of believing only in the Devil—as if this absurd belief, if it were possible, did not necessarily connote a belief in God! These three honest fellows testified under oath that, when I lost money at play, on which occasion all the faithful are wont to blaspheme, I was never heard to curse the Devil. I was further accused of eating meat all the year round, of going to hear only fine masses, and I was vehemently suspected of being a Freemason. It was added that I frequented the society of foreign ministers and that, living as I did with three noblemen, it was certain that I revealed, for the large sums which I was seen to lose, as many state secrets as I could worm out of them.

All these accusations, none of which had any foundation in fact, served the Tribunal as a pretext to treat me as an enemy of the commonwealth and a prime conspirator. For several weeks I was counselled by persons whom I might have trusted to go abroad whilst the Tribunal was engaged on my case. This should have been enough, for the only people who can live in peace at Venice are those whose existence the Tribunal is ignorant of, but I obstinately despised all these hints. If I had listened to the indirect advice which was given me, I should have become anxious, and I was a sworn foe of all anxiety. I kept saying to myself, "I feel remorse for nothing and am therefore guilty of nothing, and the innocent have nothing to fear." I was a fool, for I argued as if I had been a free man in a free country. I must also confess that what to a great extent kept me from thinking of possible misfortune was the actual misfortune which oppressed me from morning to night. I lost every day, I owed money everywhere, I had pawned all my jewels, and even my portrait cases—taking the precaution, however, of removing the portraits, which, with my important papers and my amorous letters, I had placed in the hands of Madame Manzoni. I found myself avoided in society. An old senator told me one day that it was known that the young Countess Bonafede had become mad in consequence of the love philtres I had given her. She was still at the asylum and in her moments of delirium did nothing but utter my name with curses. I must let my readers into the secret of this brief tale.

This young Countess Bonafede, to whom I had given some sequins a few days after my return to Venice, thought herself capable of making me continue my visits, from which she had profited largely. Worried by her letters, I went to see her several times and always left her a few sequins, but, with the exception of my first visit, I was never polite enough to give her any proofs of my affection. My coldness had baulked all her endeavours for a year when she played a criminal part of which, though I was never able absolutely to convict her, I had every reason to believe her guilty.

She wrote me a letter in which she importuned me to come and see her at a certain hour on important business.

My curiosity, as well as a desire to be of service to her, took me there at the appointed time; but, as soon as she saw me, she flung her arms round my neck and told me that the important business was love. This made me laugh heartily, and I was pleased to find her looking neater than usual, which, doubtless, made me find her looking prettier.

She reminded me of Fort St. André and succeeded so well in her efforts that I was on the point of satisfying her desires. I took off my cloak and asked her if her father were in. She told me he had gone out. Being obliged to go out for a minute, in coming back I mistook the door and found myself in the next room, where I was much astonished to see the count and two villainous-looking fellows with him.

"My dear count," I said, "your daughter just told me you were out."

"I myself told her to do so, as I have some business with these gentlemen, which, however, can wait for another day."

I would have gone, but he stopped me and, having dismissed the two men, told me he was delighted to see me, and forthwith began the tale of his troubles, which were of more than one kind. The State Inquisitors had stopped his slender pension, and he was on the eve of seeing himself driven out with his family into the streets to beg his bread. He said that he had not been able to pay his landlord anything for three years, but, if he could pay only a quarter's rent, he would obtain a respite, or, if he persisted in turning him out, he could make a night-flitting of it and take up his abode somewhere else. As he wanted only twenty ducats, I took out six sequins and gave them to him. He embraced me and shed tears of joy; then, taking his poor cloak, he called his daughter, told her to keep me company and went out.

Alone with the countess, I examined the door of communication between the two rooms and found it slightly open.

"Your father," I said, "would have surprised me, and it is easy to guess what he would have done with the two *sbirri* who were with him. The plot is clear, and I have escaped from it only by the happiest of chances."

She denied, wept, called God to witness, threw herself on her knees; but I turned my head away and, taking my cloak, went away without a word. She kept on writing to me, but her letters remained unanswered, and I saw her no more.

It was summer-time and between the heat, her passions, hunger and wretchedness, her head was turned, and she became so mad that she went out of the house stark naked and ran up and down St. Peter's Place, asking those who stopped her to take her to my house. This sad story went all over the town and caused me a great deal of annoyance. The poor wretch was sent to an asylum and did not recover her reason for five years. When she came out, she found herself reduced to beg her bread in the streets, like all her brothers except one, whom I found a cadet in the guards of the King of Spain twelve years afterwards.

At the time of which I am speaking, all this had happened a year

ago, but the story was dug up against me and dressed out in the attire of fiction and thus formed part of those clouds which were to discharge their thunder upon me to my destruction.

In the July of 1755 the hateful court gave Messer-Grande instructions to secure me, alive or dead. In this furious style all orders for arrests proceeding from the Three were issued, for the least of their commands carried with it the penalty of death.

Three or four days before the feast of St. James, my patron saint, M— M— made me a present of several ells of silver lace to trim a sarcenet suit which I was going to wear on the eve of the feast. I went to see her, dressed in my fine suit, and told her I would come again on the day following to ask her to lend me some money, as I did not know where to turn to find some. She was still in possession of the five hundred sequins which she had put aside when I had sold her diamonds.

As I was sure of getting the money in the morning I passed the night at play and lost the five hundred sequins in advance. At daybreak, being in need of a little quiet, I went to the Erberia, a space of ground on the quay of the Grand Canal. Here is held the herb, fruit and flower market.

People in good society who come to walk in the Erberia at a rather early hour usually say that they come to see the hundreds of boats laden with vegetables, fruit and flowers, which hail from the numerous islands near the town; but everyone knows that they are men and women who have been spending the night in the excesses of Venus and Bacchus or who have lost all hope at the gaming-table and come here to breathe a purer air and calm their minds. The fashion of walking in this place shows how the character of a nation changes. The Venetians of old time, who made as great a mystery of love as of state affairs, have been replaced by the modern Venetians, whose most prominent characteristic is to make a mystery of nothing. Those who come to the Erberia with women wish to excite the envy of their friends by thus publishing their good fortune. Those who come alone are on the watch for discoveries or on the lookout for material to make wives or husbands jealous; the women come only to be seen, glad to let everybody know that they are without any restraint upon their actions. There was certainly no question of smartness there, considering the disordered style of dress worn. The women seemed to have agreed to show all the signs of disorder imaginable to give those who saw them something to talk about. As for the men on whose arms they leaned, their careless and lounging airs were intended to give the idea of a surfeit of pleasure and to make one think that the disordered appearance of their companions was a proof of the triumph they had enjoyed. In short, it was the correct thing to look tired out and as if one stood in need of sleep.

This veracious description, reader, will not give you a very high opinion of the morals of my dear fellow citizens, but what object should I have at my age for deceiving? Venice is not at the world's end but is

well enough known to those whose curiosity brings them into Italy; and everyone can see for himself if my pictures are overdrawn.

After walking up and down for half an hour, I came away, and, thinking the whole house still a-bed, I drew my key out to open the door, but what was my astonishment to find it unnecessary, as the door was open, and, what is more, the lock burst off! I ran upstairs and found them all up and my landlady uttering bitter lamentations.

"Messer-Grande," she told me, "has entered my house forcibly, accompanied by a band of *sbirri*. He turned everything upside down on the pretext that he was in search of a portmanteau full of salt, a highly contraband article. He said he knew that a portmanteau had been landed there the evening before, which was quite true, but it belonged to Count S— and contained only linen and clothes. Messer-Grande, after inspecting it, went out without saying a word."

He had also paid my room a visit. She told me that she must have some reparation made her, and, thinking she was in the right, I promised to speak to M. de Bragadin on the matter the same day. Needing rest above all things, I lay down, but my nervous excitement, which I attributed to my heavy losses at play, made me rise after three or four hours, and I went to see M. de Bragadin, to whom I told the whole story, begging him to press for some signal amends. I made a lively representation to him of all the grounds on which my landlady required proportionate amends to be made, since the laws guaranteed the peace of all law-abiding people.

I saw that the three friends were greatly saddened by what I said, and the wise old man quietly but sadly told me that I should have my answer after dinner.

De la Haye dined with us, but all through the meal, which was a melancholy one, he spoke not a word. His silence should have told me all if I had not been under the influence of some malevolent genie who would not allow me to exercise my common sense; as to the sorrow of my three friends, I put that down to their friendship for me.

My connection with these worthy men had always been the talk of the town, and, as all were agreed that it could not be explained on natural grounds, it was deemed to be the effect of some sorcery exercised by me. These three men were thoroughly religious and virtuous citizens; I was nothing if not irreligious, and Venice did not contain a greater libertine. Virtue, it was said, may have compassion on vice but cannot become its friend.

After dinner M. de Bragadin took me into his closet with his two friends, from whom he had no secrets. He told me with wonderful calmness that, instead of meditating vengeance on Messer-Grande, I should be thinking of putting myself in a place of safety.

"The portmanteau," said he, "was a mere pretext; it was you they wanted and thought to find. Since your good genius has made them miss you, look out for yourself; perhaps by to-morrow it may be too late. I was a State Inquisitor for eight months, and I know the way in which the arrests ordered by the court are carried out. They would

not break open a door to look for a box of salt. Indeed, it is possible that they knew you were out and sought to warn you to escape in this manner. Take my advice, my dear son, and set out directly for Fusina, and thence as quickly as you can make your way to Florence, where you can remain till I write you that you may return with safety. If you have no money, I will give you a hundred sequins for present expenses. Believe me, prudence bids you go."

Blinded by my folly, I answered him that, being guilty of nothing, I had nothing to fear and that consequently, although I knew his advice was good, I could not follow it.

"The high court," said he, "may deem you guilty of crimes real or imaginary; but in any case it will give you no account of the accusations against you. Ask your oracle if you shall follow my advice or not." I refused because I knew the folly of such a proceeding, but by way of excuse I said that I consulted it only when I was in doubt. Finally, I argued that, if I fled, I should be showing fear, and thus confessing my guilt, for an innocent man, feeling no remorse, cannot reasonably be afraid of anything.

"If secrecy," said I, "is the essence of the court, you cannot possibly judge after my escape whether I have done so rightly or wrongly. The same reasons which, according to Your Excellency, bid me go would forbid my return. Must I then say goodbye forever to my country and all that is dear to me?"

As a last resource, he tried to persuade me to pass the following day and night, at least, at the palace. I am still ashamed of having refused the worthy old man, to whom I owed so much, this favour, for the palace of a noble is sacred to the police, who dare not cross its threshold without a special order from the Tribunal, which is practically never given; by yielding to his request, I should have avoided a grievous misfortune and spared the worthy old man some acute grief.

I was moved to see M. de Bragadin weeping, and perhaps I might have granted to his tears that which I had obstinately refused to his arguments and entreaties. "For Heaven's sake!" said I, "spare me the harrowing sight of your tears." In an instant he summoned all his strength to his assistance, made some indifferent remarks and then, with a smile of good nature, embraced me, saying, "Perhaps I may be fated never to see you again, but *Fata viam inveniunt*."

I embraced him affectionately and went away, but his prediction was verified, for I never saw him again; he died eleven years afterwards. I found myself in the street without feeling the slightest fear, but I was in a good deal of trouble about my debts. I had not the heart to go to Muran to take away from M— M— her last five hundred sequins, which sum I owed to the man who had won it from me in the night; I preferred asking him to wait eight days, and I did so. After performing this unpleasant piece of business, I returned home, and, having consoled my landlady to the utmost of my powers, I kissed the daughter, and lay down to sleep. The date was July 25th, 1755.

Next morning at daybreak who should enter my room but the awful

Messer-Grande! To awake, to see him and to hear him asking if I were Jacques Casanova was the work of a moment. At my "Yes, I am Casanova," he told me to rise, put on my clothes, give him all the papers and manuscripts in my possession and follow him.

"On whose authority do you order me to do this?"

"By the authority of the Tribunal."

CHAPTER 49

WHAT a strange and unexplained power certain words exercise upon the soul! I, who the evening before so bravely fortified myself with my innocence and courage, by the word "Tribunal" was turned to a stone, with merely the faculty of passive obedience left to me.

My desk was open, and all my papers were on a table where I was accustomed to write.

"Take them," said I, to the agent of the dreadful Tribunal, pointing to the papers which covered the table. He filled a bag with them and gave it to one of the *sbirri* and then told me that I must also give up the bound manuscripts which I had in my possession. I showed him where they were, and this incident opened my eyes. I saw now clearly enough that I had been betrayed by the wretch Manuzzi. The books were *The Key of Solomon the King*, *the Zecorben*, a *Picatrix*, a book of *Instructions on the Planetary Hours* and the necessary incantations for conversing with demons of all sorts. Those who were aware that I possessed these books took me for an expert magician, and I was not sorry to have such a reputation.

Messer-Grande took also the books on the table by my bed, such as Petrarch, Ariosto, Horace, *The Military Philosopher* (a manuscript which Mathilde had given me), *The Porter of Chartreux* and Aretino, which Manuzzi had also denounced, for Messer-Grande asked me for it by name. The spy Manuzzi had all the appearance of an honest man, a very necessary qualification for his profession. His son made his fortune in Poland by marrying a lady named Opeska, whom they say he killed, though I have never had any positive proof on the matter and am willing to stretch Christian charity to the extent of believing he was innocent, although he was quite capable of such a crime.

While Messer-Grande was thus rummaging among my manuscripts, books and letters, I was dressing in an absent-minded manner, neither hurrying nor the reverse. I made my toilette, shaved and combed my hair, putting on mechanically a laced shirt and my holiday suit without saying a word and without Messer-Grande, who did not let me escape his sight for an instant, complaining that I was dressing as if I were going to a wedding.

As I went out, I was surprised to see a band of forty men-at-arms in the ante-room. They had done me the honour of thinking all these men necessary for my arrest, though, according to the axiom *Ne Hercules quidem contra duos*, two would have been enough. It is curious that in

London, where everyone is brave, only one man is needed to arrest another, whereas in my dear native land, where cowardice prevails, thirty are required. The reason is, perhaps, that the coward on the offensive is more afraid than the coward on the defensive, and thus a man usually cowardly is transformed for the moment into a man of courage. It is certain that at Venice one often sees a man defending himself against twenty *shirri* and finally escaping after beating them soundly. I remember once helping a friend of mine at Paris to escape from the hands of forty bum-bailiffs, and we put the whole vile rout of them to flight.

Messer-Grande made me get into a gondola and sat down near me with an escort of four men. When we came to our destination, he offered me coffee, which I refused, and he then shut me up in a room. I passed these four hours in sleep, waking up every quarter of an hour to pass water—an extraordinary occurrence, as I was not at all subject to strangury, the heat was great and I had not supped the evening before. I have noticed at other times that surprise at a deed of oppression acts on me as a powerful narcotic, but I found out at the time I speak of that great surprise is a diuretic. I turn this discovery over to the doctors; it is possible that some learned man may make use of it to solace the ills of humanity. I remember laughing very heartily at Prague six years ago on learning that some thin-skinned ladies, on reading my flight from The Leads, which was published at that date, took great offence at the above account, which they thought I should have done well to leave out. I should have left it out, perhaps, in speaking to a lady, but the public is not a pretty woman whom I am intent on cajoling; my only aim is to be instructive. Indeed, I see no impropriety in the circumstance I have narrated, which is as common to men and women as eating and drinking; and, if there is anything in it to shock too sensitive nerves, it is that we resemble in this respect the cows and pigs.

It is probable that, just as my overwhelmed soul gave signs of its failing strength by the loss of the thinking faculty, so my body distilled a great part of those fluids which by their continual circulation set the thinking faculty in motion. Thus a sudden shock might cause instantaneous death and send one to Paradise by a cut much too short.

In course of time the captain of the men-at-arms came to tell me that he was under orders to take me under The Leads. Without a word I followed him. We went by gondola, and after a thousand turnings among the small canals we got into the Grand Canal and landed at the prison quay. After climbing several flights of stairs, we crossed a closed bridge which forms the communication between the prisons and the Doge's Palace, crossing the canal called Rio di Palazzo. On the other side of this bridge there is a gallery, which we traversed. We then crossed one room and entered another, where sat an individual in the dress of a noble, who, after looking fixedly at me, said, "*E quello, met-tetelo in deposito.*"

This man was the secretary of the Inquisitors, the prudent Dominic

Cavalli, who was apparently ashamed to speak Venetian in my presence, as he pronounced my doom in the Tuscan language.

Messer-Grande then made me over to the warden of The Leads, who stood by with an enormous bunch of keys and, accompanied by two guards, made me climb two short flights of stairs, at the top of which followed a passage and then another gallery, at the end of which he opened a door, and I found myself in a dirty garret, thirty-six feet long by twelve broad, badly lighted by a window high up in the roof. I thought this garret was my prison, but I was mistaken, for, taking an enormous key, the gaoler opened a thick door lined with iron, three and a half feet high, with a round hole in the middle, eight inches in diameter, just as I was looking intently at an iron machine. This machine was like a horseshoe, an inch thick and about five inches across from one end to the other. I was thinking what could be the use to which this horrible instrument was put, when the gaoler said, with a smile:

"I see, sir, that you wish to know what that is for, and, as it happens, I can satisfy your curiosity. When Their Excellencies give orders that anyone is to be strangled, he is made to sit down on a stool, his back to this collar, and his head is so placed that the collar goes round one half of the neck. A silk band which goes around the other half passes through this hole, and the two ends are connected with the axle of a wheel, which is turned by someone until the prisoner gives up the ghost; for the confessor, God be thanked! never leaves him till he is dead."

"All this sounds very ingenious, and I should think that it is you who have the honour of turning the wheel."

He made no answer, and, signing to me to enter, which I did by bending double, he shut me up and afterwards asked me through the grated hole what I would like to eat.

"I haven't thought anything about it yet," I answered. And he went away, locking all the doors carefully behind him.

Stunned with grief, I leant my elbows on the top of the grating. It was crossed by six iron bars an inch thick, which formed sixteen square holes. This opening would have lighted my cell if a square beam supporting the roof, which joined the wall below the window, had not intercepted what little light came into that horrid garret. After making the tour of my sad abode, my head lowered, as the cell was not more than five and a half feet high, I found by groping along that it formed three-quarters of a square of twelve feet. The fourth quarter was a kind of recess, which would have held a bed; but there was neither bed nor table nor chair nor any furniture whatever except a bucket—the use of which may be guessed—and a bench fixed in the wall a foot wide and four feet from the ground. On it I placed my cloak, my fine suit and my hat trimmed with Spanish point and adorned with a beautiful white feather. The heat was great, and my instinct made me go mechanically to the grating, the only place where I could lean on my elbows. I could not see the window, but I saw the

light in the garret and rats of a fearful size, which walked unconcernedly about it, these horrible creatures coming close under my grating without showing the slightest fear. At the sight of these I hastened to close up the round hole in the middle of the door with an inside shutter, for a visit from one of the rats would have frozen my blood. I passed eight hours in silence and without stirring, my arms all the time crossed on the top of the grating.

At last the clock roused me from my reverie, and I began to feel uneasy that no one came to give me anything to eat or bring me a bed whereon to sleep. I thought they might at least let me have a chair and some bread and water. I had no appetite, certainly; but were my gaolers to guess as much? And never in my life had I been so thirsty. I was quite sure, however, that somebody would come before the close of the day; but, when I heard eight o'clock strike, I became furious, knocking at the door, stamping my feet, fretting and fuming and accompanying this useless hubbub with loud cries. After more than an hour of this wild exercise, seeing no one, without the slightest reason to think I could be heard and shrouded in darkness, I shut the grating for fear of the rats and threw myself at full length upon the floor. So cruel a desertion seemed to me unnatural, and I came to the conclusion that the Inquisitors had sworn my death. My investigation as to what I had done to deserve such a fate was not a long one, for in the most scrupulous examination of my conduct I could find no crimes. I was, it is true, a profligate, a gambler, a bold talker, a man who thought of little besides enjoying this present life, but in all that there was no offence against the state. Nevertheless, finding myself treated as a criminal, rage and despair made me express myself against the horrible despotism which oppressed me in a manner which I will leave to my readers to guess, but which I will not repeat here. But, in spite of this, my grief and anxiety, the hunger which began to make itself felt, the thirst which tormented me and the hardness of the boards on which I lay did not prevent exhausted nature from reasserting her rights; I fell asleep.

My strong constitution was in need of sleep; and in a young and healthy subject this imperious necessity silences all others, and in this way above all is sleep rightly termed the benefactor of man.

The clock striking midnight awoke me. How sad is the awaking when it makes one regret one's empty dreams. I could scarcely believe that I had spent three painless hours. As I lay on my left side, I stretched out my right hand to get my handkerchief, which I remembered putting on that side. I felt about for it, when—heavens! what was my surprise to feel another hand as cold as ice. The fright sent an electric shock through me, and my hair began to stand on end.

Never had I been so alarmed, nor should I have previously thought myself capable of experiencing such terror. I passed three or four minutes in a kind of swoon, not only motionless but incapable of thinking. As I got back my senses by degrees, I tried to make myself believe that the hand I fancied I had touched was a mere creature of my dis-

ordered imagination; and with this idea I stretched out my hand again, and again with the same result. Benumbed with fright, I uttered a piercing cry and, dropping the hand I held, drew back my arm, trembling all over.

Soon, as I got a little calmer and more capable of reasoning, I concluded that a corpse had been placed beside me whilst I slept, for I was certain it was not there when I lay down.

"This," said I, "is the body of some strangled wretch, and they would thus warn me of the fate which is in store for me."

The thought maddened me; and, my fear giving place to rage, for the third time I stretched my arm towards the icy hand, seizing it to make certain of the fact in all its atrocity, and, wishing to get up, I rose upon my left elbow and found that I had got hold of my other hand. Deadened by the weight of my body and the hardness of the boards, it had lost warmth, motion and all sensation.

In spite of humorous features in this incident, it did not cheer me up, but, on the contrary, inspired me with the darkest fancies. I saw that I was in a place where, if the false appeared true, the truth might appear false, where understanding was bereft of half its prerogatives, where the imagination, becoming affected, would make the reason a victim either to empty hopes or to dark despair. I resolved to be on my guard; and for the first time in my life, at the age of thirty, I called philosophy to my assistance. I had within me all the seeds of philosophy, but so far I had had no need for it.

I am convinced that most men die without ever having thought, in the proper sense of the word, not so much for want of wit or of good sense, but rather because the shock necessary to the reasoning faculty in its inception has never occurred to them to lift them out of their daily habits.

After what I had experienced, I could think of sleep no more, and to get up would have been useless, as I could not stand upright, so I took the only sensible course and remained seated. I sat thus till four o'clock in the morning. The sun would rise at five, and I longed to see the day, for a presentiment which I held infallible told me that it would set me again at liberty. I was consumed with a desire for revenge, nor did I conceal it from myself. I saw myself at the head of the people, about to exterminate the government which had oppressed me; I massacred all the aristocrats without pity; all must be shattered and brought to the dust. I was delirious; I knew the authors of my misfortune, and in my fancy I destroyed them. I restored the natural right common to all men of being obedient only to the law and of being tried only by peers and by laws to which they have agreed—in short, I quilt castles in Spain. Such is man when he has become the prey of a devouring passion. He does not suspect that the principle which moves him is not reason but its greatest enemy, wrath.

I waited for a less time than I had expected, and thus I became a little more quiet. At half-past four the deadly silence of the place,

this Hell of the living, was broken by the shriek of bolts being shot back in the passages leading to my cell.

"Have you had time yet to think about what you will take to eat?" said the harsh voice of my gaoler from the wicket.

One is lucky when the insolence of a wretch like this shows itself only in the guise of jesting. I answered that I should like some rice soup, a piece of boiled beef, a roast, bread, wine and water. I saw that the lout was astonished not to hear the lamentations he expected. He went away and came back again in a quarter of an hour to say that he was astonished I did not require a bed and the necessary pieces of furniture, "for," said he, "if you flatter yourself that you are here only for a night, you are very much mistaken."

"Then bring me whatever you think necessary."

"Where shall I go for it? Here is a pencil and paper; write it down."

I showed him by writing where to go for my shirts, stockings and clothes of all sorts, a bed, table, chair, the books which Messer-Grande had confiscated, paper, pens, and so forth. On my reading out the list to him (the lout did not know how to read), he cried, "Scratch out books, paper, pens, looking-glass and razors, for all that is forbidden fruit here, and then give me some money to get your dinner." I had three sequins, so I gave him one, and he went off. He spent an hour in the passages, engaged, as I learned afterwards, in attending on seven other prisoners who were imprisoned in cells placed far apart from each other to prevent all communication.

About noon the gaoler reappeared followed by five guards, whose duty it was to serve the state prisoners. He opened the cell door to bring in my dinner and the furniture I had asked for. The bed was placed in the recess, my dinner was laid out on a small table, and I had to eat with an ivory spoon he had procured out of the money I had given him, all forks, knives, and edged tools being forbidden.

"Tell me what you would like for to-morrow," said he, "for I can come here only once a day at sunrise. The Lord High Secretary has told me to inform you that he will send you some suitable books, but those you wish for are forbidden."

"Thank him for his kindness in putting me by myself."

"I will do so, but you make a mistake in jesting thus."

"I don't jest at all, for I think truly that it is much better to be alone than to mingle with the scoundrels who are doubtless here."

"What, sir! scoundrels? Not at all, not at all. They are only respectable people here, who, for reasons known to Their Excellencies alone, have to be sequestered from society. You have been put by yourself as an additional punishment, and you want me to thank the secretary on that account?"

"I was not aware of that."

The fool was right, and I soon found it out. I discovered that a man imprisoned by himself can have no occupations. Alone in a gloomy cell where he sees only the fellow who brings his food once

a day, where he cannot walk upright, he is the most wretched of men. He would like to be in hell, if he believes in it, for the sake of the company. So strong a feeling is this that I got to desire the company of a murderer, of one stricken with the plague or of a bear. The loneliness behind the prison bars is terrible, but it must be learnt by experience to be understood, and such an experience I would not wish even to my enemies. To a man of letters in my situation, paper and ink would take away nine-tenths of the torture, but the wretches who persecuted me did not dream of granting me such an alleviation of my misery.

After the gaoler had gone, I set my table near the grating for the sake of the light and sat down to dinner, but I could only swallow a few spoonfuls of soup. Having fasted for nearly forty-eight hours, it was not surprising that I felt ill. I passed the day quietly enough seated on my sofa and proposing to myself to read the "suitable books" which they had been good enough to promise me. I did not shut my eyes the whole night, kept awake by the hideous noise made by the rats and by the deafening chime of the clock of St. Mark's, which seemed to be striking in my room. This double vexation was not my chief trouble, and I daresay many of my readers will guess what I am going to speak of, namely, the myriads of fleas which held high holiday over me. These small insects drank my blood with unutterable voracity, their incessant bites gave me spasmodic convulsions and poisoned my blood.

At daybreak Lawrence (such was the gaoler's name) came to my cell and had my bed made and the room swept and cleansed, and one of the guards gave me water wherewith to wash myself. I wanted to take a walk in the garret, but Lawrence told me that was forbidden. He gave me two thick books, which I forbore to open, not being quite sure of repressing the wrath with which they might inspire me, and which the spy would have infallibly reported to his masters. After leaving me my fodder and two cut lemons he went away.

As soon as I was alone, I ate my soup in a hurry, so as to take it hot, and then drew as near as I could to the light with one of the books and was delighted to find that I could see to read. I looked at the title, and read *The Mystical City of Sister Mary of Agradá*. I had never heard of it. The other book was by a Jesuit named Caravita. This fellow, a hypocrite like the rest of them, had invented a new cult of the Adoration of the Sacred Heart of Our Lord Jesus Christ. This, according to the author, was the part of our Divine Redeemer which above all others should be adored—a curious idea of a besotted ignoramus, with which I got disgusted at the first page, for to my thinking the heart is no more worthy a part than the lungs, stomach or any other of the inwards. The *Mystical City* rather interested me.

I read in it the wild conceptions of a Spanish nun, devout to superstition, melancholy, shut in by convent walls and swayed by the ignorance and bigotry of her confessors. All these grotesque, monstrous and fantastic visions of hers were dignified with the name of

"revelations." The lover and bosom friend of the Holy Virgin, she had received instruction from God Himself to write the life of His divine mother; the necessary information was furnished her by the Holy Ghost.

This life of Mary began, not with the day of her birth, but with her immaculate conception in the womb of Anne, her mother. This Sister Mary of Agrada was the head of a Franciscan convent founded by herself in her own house. After telling in detail all the deeds of her divine heroine whilst in her mother's womb, she informs us that at the age of three she swept and cleansed the house with the assistance of nine hundred servants, all of whom were angels whom God had placed at her disposal under the command of Michael, who came and went between God and herself to conduct their mutual correspondence.

What strikes the judicious reader of the book is the evident belief of the more than fanatical writer that nothing is due to her invention; everything is told in good faith and with full belief. The work contains the dreams of a visionary, who, without vanity but inebriated with the idea of God, thinks to reveal only the inspirations of the Divine Spirit.

The book was published with the permission of the very holy and very horrible Inquisition. I could not recover from my astonishment! Far from its stirring up in my breast a holy and simple zeal for religion, it inclined me to treat all the mystical dogmas of the Faith as fabulous.

Such works may have dangerous results; for example, a more susceptible reader than myself or one more inclined to believe in the marvellous runs the risk of becoming as great a visionary as the poor nun herself.

The need of doing something made me spend a week over this masterpiece of madness, the product of a hyper-exalted brain. I took care to say nothing to the gaoler about this fine work, but I began to feel the effects of reading it. As soon as I went off to sleep, I experienced the disease which Sister Mary of Agrada had communicated to my mind weakened by melancholy, want of proper nourishment and exercise, bad air and the horrible uncertainty of my fate. The wildness of my dreams made me laugh when I recalled them in my waking moments. If I had possessed the necessary materials, I would have written my visions down, and I might possibly have produced in my cell a still madder work than the one chosen with such insight by Cavalli.

This set me thinking how mistaken is the opinion which makes human intellect an absolute force; it is merely relative, and he who studies himself carefully will find only weakness. I perceived that, though men rarely become mad, still such an event is well within the bounds of possibility, for our reasoning faculties are like powder, which, though it catches fire easily, will never catch fire at all without a spark. The book of the Spanish nun has all the properties necessary to make a man crack-brained; but, for the poison to take effect, he

must be isolated, put under The Leads and deprived of all other employments.

In November, 1767, as I was going from Pampeluna to Madrid, my coachman, Andrea Capello, stopped for us to dine in a town of Old Castille. So dismal and dreary a place did I find it that I asked its name. How I laughed when I was told that it was Agradá!

"Here, then," I said to myself, "did that saintly lunatic produce that masterpiece which, but for M. Cavalli, I should never have known."

An old priest who had the highest possible opinion of me the moment I began to ask him about this truthful historian of the mother of Christ, showed me the very place where she had written it and assured me that the father, mother, sister and, in short, all the kindred of the blessed biographer had been great saints in their generation. He told me, and spoke truly, that the Spaniards had solicited her canonisation in Rome, with that of the venerable Palafox. This *Mystical City*, perhaps, gave Father Malagrida the idea of writing the life of St. Anne, written, also, at the dictation of the Holy Ghost, but the poor devil of a Jesuit had to suffer martyrdom for it—an additional reason for his canonisation if the horrible society ever comes to life again and attains the universal power which is its secret aim.

At the end of eight or nine days I found myself moneyless. Lawrence asked me for some, but I did not have it.

"Where can I get some?" he asked.

"Nowhere."

What displeased this ignorant and gossiping fellow about me was my silence and my laconic manner of talking.

Next day he told me that the Tribunal had assigned me fifty sous per diem, of which he would have to take charge, but that he would give me an account of his expenditure every month and would spend the surplus on what I liked.

"Get me the Leyden Gazette twice a week."

"I can't do that because it is not allowed by authorities."

Sixty-five livres a month was more than I needed, since I could not eat more than I did; the great heat and the want of proper nourishment had weakened me. It was in the dog days; the strength of the sun's rays upon the lead of the roof made my cell like a stove, so that the streams of perspiration which rolled off my poor body as I sat quite naked on my sofa-chair wetted the floor to right and left of me.

I had been in this hell-on-earth for fifteen days without any excretion from the bowels. At the end of this almost incredible time nature reasserted herself, and I thought my last hour had come. The hæmorrhoidal veins were swollen to such an extent that the pressure on them gave me almost unbearable agony. To this fatal time I owe the inception of that sad infirmity of which I have never been able to completely cure myself. The recurrence of the same pains, though not so acute, remind me of the cause and do not make my remembrance of it any the more agreeable. This disease got me compliments in

Russia when I was there ten years later, and I found it in such esteem that I did not dare to complain. The same kind of thing happened to me at Constantinople, when I was complaining of a cold in the head in the presence of a Turk, who was thinking, I could see, that a dog of a Christian was not worthy of such a blessing.

The same day I sickened with a high fever and kept my bed. I said nothing to Lawrence about it, but the day after, on finding my dinner untouched, he asked me how I was.

"Very well."

"That can't be, sir, as you have eaten nothing. You are ill, and you will experience the generosity of the Tribunal, who will provide you, without fee or charge, with a physician, surgeon and all necessary medicines."

He went out, returning after three hours without guards, holding a candle in his hand and followed by a grave-looking personage; this was the doctor. I was in the height of the fever, which had not left me for three days. He came up to me and began to ask me questions, but I told him that with my confessor and my doctor I would speak only privately. The doctor told Lawrence to leave the room, but, on the refusal of that Argus to do so, he went away, saying that I was dangerously ill, possibly unto death. For this I hoped, for my life as it had become was no longer my chiefest good. I was somewhat glad also to think that my pitiless persecutors might, on hearing of my condition, be forced to reflect on the cruelty of the treatment to which they had subjected me.

Four hours afterwards I heard the noise of bolts once more, and the doctor came in holding the candle himself. Lawrence remained outside. I had become so weak that I experienced a grateful restfulness. Kindly nature does not suffer a man seriously ill to feel weary. I was delighted to hear that my infamous turnkey was outside, for since his explanation of the iron collar I had looked on him with loathing.

In a quarter of an hour I had told the doctor all.

"If we want to get well," said he, "we must not be melancholy."

"Write me the prescription and take it to the only apothecary who can make it up. M. Cavalli is the bad doctor who prescribed *The Heart of Jesus*, and *The Mystical City*."

"Those two preparations are quite capable of having brought on the fever and the hæmorrhoids. I will not forsake you."

After making me a large jug of lemonade and telling me to drink frequently, he went away. I slept soundly, dreaming fantastic dreams.

In the morning the doctor came again with Lawrence and a surgeon, who bled me. The doctor left me some medicine, which he told me to take in the evening, and a bottle of soup. "I have obtained leave," said he, "for you to move into the garret, where the heat is less and the air better than here."

"I decline the favour, as I abominate the rats, which you know nothing about and which would certainly get into my bed."

"What a pity! I told M. Cavalli that he had almost killed you with

his books, and he has commissioned me to take them back and to give you Boethius; and here it is."

"I am much obliged to you. I like it better than Seneca, and I am sure it will do me good."

"I am leaving you a very necessary instrument and some barley water for you to refresh yourself with."

He visited me four times and pulled me through; my constitution did the rest, and my appetite returned. At the beginning of September I found myself, on the whole, very well, suffering from no actual ills except the heat, the vermin, and ennui, for I could not be always reading Boethius.

One day Lawrence told me that I might go out of my cell to wash myself whilst the bed was being made and the room swept. I took advantage of the favour to walk up and down for the ten minutes taken by these operations, and, as I walked hard, the rats were alarmed and dared not show themselves. On the same day Lawrence gave me an account of my money, and brought himself in as my debtor to the amount of thirty livres, which, however, I could not put into my pocket. I left the money in his hands, telling him to lay it out on masses on my behalf, feeling sure that he would make quite a different use of it, and he thanked me in a tone that persuaded me he would be his own priest. I gave him the money every month, and I never saw a priest's receipt. Lawrence was wise to celebrate the sacrifice at the tavern; the money was useful to someone at all events.

I lived from day to day, persuading myself every night that the next day I should be at liberty; but, as I was each day deceived, I decided in my poor brain that I should be set free without fail on the first of October, on which day the new Inquisitors begin their term of office. According to this theory, my imprisonment would last as long as the authority of the present Inquisitors, and thus was explained the fact that I had seen nothing of the secretary, who would otherwise have undoubtedly come to interrogate, examine and convict me of my crimes and finally to announce my doom. All this appeared to me unanswerable because it seemed natural, but it was fallacious under The Leads, where nothing is done after the natural order. I imagined the Inquisitors must have discovered my innocence and the wrong they had done me and that they kept me in prison only for form's sake and to protect their repute from the stain of committing injustice; hence I concluded that they would give me my freedom when they laid down their tyrannical authority. My mind was so composed and quiet that I felt as if I could forgive them and forget the wrong they had done me. "How can they leave me here to the mercy of their successors," I thought, "to whom they cannot leave any evidence capable of condemning me?" I could not believe that my sentence had been pronounced and confirmed, without my being told of it, or of the reasons by which my judges had been actuated. I was so certain that I had right on my side that I reasoned accordingly; but this was not the attitude I should have assumed towards a court which stands aloof from all the courts in the world for

its unbounded absolutism. To prove anyone guilty, it is only necessary for the Inquisitors to proceed against him; so there is no need to speak to him, and, when he is condemned, it would be useless to announce to the prisoner his sentence, as his consent is not required and they prefer to leave the poor wretch the feeling of hope; and certainly, if he were told the whole process, imprisonment would not be shortened by an hour. The wise man tells no one of his business, and the business of the Tribunal of Venice is only to judge and to doom. The guilty party is not required to have any share in the matter; he is like a nail, which, to be driven into a wall, needs only to be struck.

To a certain extent I was acquainted with the ways of the Colossus which was crushing me under foot, but there are things on earth which one can truly understand only by experience. If amongst my readers there are any who think such laws unjust, I forgive them, as I know they have a strong likeness to injustice; but let me tell them that they are also necessary, as a tribunal like the Venetian could not subsist without them. Those who maintain these laws in full vigour are senators, chosen from amongst the fittest for that office and with a reputation for honour and virtue.

The last day of September I passed a sleepless night and was on thorns to see the dawn appear, so sure was I that that day would make me free. The reign of those villains who had made me a captive drew to a close; but the dawn appeared, Lawrence came as usual and told me nothing new. For five or six days I hovered between rage and despair, and then I imagined that for some reasons which to me were unfathomable they had decided to keep me prisoner for the remainder of my days. This awful idea only made me laugh, for I knew that it was in my power to remain a slave for no long time, but only till I should take it into my own hands to break my prison. I knew that I should escape or die: *Deliberata morte ferocior*.

In the beginning of November I seriously formed the plan of forcibly escaping from a place where I was forcibly kept. I began to rack my brain to find a way of carrying the idea into execution, and I conceived a hundred schemes, each one bolder than the other, but a new plan always made me give up the one I was on the point of accepting.

While I was immersed in this toilsome sea of thought, an event happened which brought home to me the sad state of mind I was in.

I was standing up in the garret looking towards the top, and my glance fell on the great beam, not shaking but turning on its right side, and then, by a slow and interrupted movement in the opposite direction, turning again and replacing itself in its original position. As I lost my balance at the same time, I knew it was the shock of an earthquake. Lawrence and the guards, who just then left my room, said that they, too had felt the earth tremble. In such despair was I that this incident made me feel a joy which I kept to myself, saying nothing. Four or five seconds after the same movement occurred, and I could not refrain from saying, "Another, O my God! but stronger."

The guards, terrified with what they thought the impious ravings of a desperate madman, fled in horror.

After they were gone, as I was pondering the matter over, I found that I looked upon the overthrow of the Doge's Palace as one of the events which might lead to liberty; the mighty pile, as it fell, might throw me safe and sound, and consequently free, on St. Mark's Place or, at the worst, it could only crush me beneath its ruins. Situated as I was, liberty reckons for all and life for nothing, or rather for very little. Thus in the depths of my soul I began to grow mad.

This earthquake shock was the result of those which at the same time destroyed Lisbon.

CHAPTER 50

To make the reader understand how I managed to escape from a place like The Leads, I must explain the nature of the locality.

The Leads, used for the confinement of state prisoners, are in fact the lofts of the ducal palace and take their name from the large plates of lead with which the roof is covered. One can reach them only through the gates of the palace, the prison buildings or by the bridge of which I have spoken, called the Bridge of Sighs. It is impossible to reach the cells without passing through the hall where the State Inquisitors hold their meetings, and their secretary has the sole charge of the key, which he gives to the gaoler only for a short time in the early morning whilst he is attending to the prisoners. This is done at daybreak because otherwise the guards as they came and went would be in the way of those who have to do with the Council of Ten, as the Council meets every day in a hall called The Bussola, which the guards have to cross every time they go to The Leads.

The prisoners are under the roof on two sides of the palace, three to the west (mine being among the number) and four to the east. On the west the roof looks into the court of the palace and on the east straight on to the canal called Rio di Palazzo. On this side the cells are well lighted, and one can stand up straight, which is not the case in the prison where I was, which was distinguished by the name of Trave, on account of the enormous beam which deprived me of light. The floor of my cell was directly over the ceiling of the Inquisitors' hall, where they commonly met only at night after the sitting of the Council of Ten, of which all three are members.

As I knew my ground and the habits of the Inquisitors perfectly well, the only way to escape—the only way, at least, which I deemed likely to succeed—was to make a hole in the floor of my cell; but to do this tools must be obtained—a difficult task in a place where all communication with the outside world was forbidden, where neither letters nor visits were allowed. To bribe a guard, a good deal of money would be necessary and I had none. And supposing that the gaoler and his two guards allowed themselves to be strangled (for my hands were my only

weapons), there was always a third guard on duty at the door of the passage, which he locked and would not open till his fellow who wished to pass through gave him the password. In spite of all these difficulties, my only thought was how to escape, and, as Boethius gave me no hints on this point, I read him no more, and, as I was certain that the difficulty was only to be solved by stress of thinking, I centred all my thoughts on this one object.

It has always been my opinion that, when a man sets himself determinedly to do something and thinks of nought but his design, he must succeed despite all difficulties in his path; such an one may make himself Pope or Grand Vizier, he may overturn an ancient line of kings, provided he knows how to seize on his opportunity and be a man of wit and pertinacity. To succeed, one must count on being fortunate and despise all ill success, but it is a most difficult operation.

Towards the middle of November Lawrence told me that Messer-Grande had a prisoner in his hands whom the new secretary, Businello, had ordered to be placed in the worst cell and who consequently was going to share mine. He told me that, on reminding the secretary that I looked upon it as a favour to be left alone, he answered that I must have grown wiser in the four months of my imprisonment. I was not sorry to hear the news or that there was a new secretary. This M. Pierre Businello was a worthy man whom I knew at Paris. He afterwards went to London as ambassador of the Republic.

In the afternoon I heard the noise of the bolts, and presently Lawrence and two guards entered, leading in a young man who was weeping bitterly; and, after taking off his handcuffs, they shut him up with me and went out without saying a word. I was lying on my bed, and he could not see me. I was amused at his astonishment. Being, fortunately for himself, seven or eight inches shorter than I, he was able to stand upright, and he began to inspect my armchair, which he doubtless thought was meant for his own use. Glancing at the ledge above the grating, he saw Boethius, took it up, opened it and put it down with a kind of passion, probably because, being in Latin, it was of no use to him. Continuing his inspection of the cell, he went to the left and, groping about, was much surprised to find clothes. He approached the recess and, stretching out his hand, touched me and immediately begged my pardon in a respectful manner. I asked him to sit down, and we were friends.

"Who are you?" said I.

"I am Maggiorin, of Vicenza. My father, who was a coachman, kept me at school till I was eleven, by which time I had learnt to read and write; I was afterwards apprenticed to a barber, where I learnt my business thoroughly. After that I became valet to the Count of X—. I had been in the service of this nobleman for two years when his daughter came from the convent. It was my duty to do her hair, and by degrees I fell in love with her and inspired her with a reciprocal passion. After having sworn a thousand times to exist only for one another, we gave ourselves up to the task of showing each other marks

of our affection, the result of which was that the state of the young countess disclosed all. An old and devoted servant was the first to find out our connection and the condition of my mistress, and she told her that she felt in duty bound to tell her father, but my sweetheart succeeded in making her promise to be silent, saying that in the course of the week she herself would tell him through her confessor. She informed me of all this, and, instead of going to confession, we prepared for flight. She had laid hands on a good sum of money and some diamonds which had belonged to her mother, and we were to set out for Milan to-night. But to-day the count called me after dinner and, giving me a letter, told me to start at once and deliver it with my own hand to the person to whom it was addressed in Venice. He spoke to me so kindly and quietly that I had not the slightest suspicion of the fate in store for me. I went to get my cloak and said goodbye to my little wife, telling her that I should soon return. Seeing deeper below the surface than I and perchance having a presentiment of my misfortune, she was sick at heart. I came here in hot haste and took care to deliver the fatal letter. They made me wait for an answer, and in the meantime I went to an inn; but, as I came out, I was arrested and put in the guardroom, where I was kept till they brought me here. I suppose, sir, I might consider the young countess as my wife?"

"You make a mistake."

"But nature—"

"Nature, when a man listens to her and nothing else, takes him from one folly to another, till she puts him under The Leads."

"I am under The Leads, then, am I?"

"As I am."

The poor young man shed some bitter tears. He was a fine-looking lad, open, honest and amorous beyond words. I secretly pardoned the countess and condemned the count for exposing his daughter to such temptation. A shepherd who shuts up the wolf in the fold should not complain if his flock be devoured. In all his tears and lamentations he thought not of himself but always of his sweetheart. He thought the gaoler would return and bring him some food and a bed; but I deceived him and offered him a share of what I had. His heart, however, was too full for him to eat. In the evening I gave him my mattress, on which he passed the night, for, though he looked neat and clean enough, I did not care to have him to sleep with me, dreading the results of a lover's dreams. He understood neither how wrongly he had acted nor how the count was constrained to punish him publicly as a cloak to the honour of his daughter and his house.

The next day he was given a mattress and a dinner to the value of fifteen sous, which the Tribunal had assigned to him, as either a favour or a charity, for the word "justice" would not be appropriate in speaking of that terrible body. I told the gaoler that my dinner would suffice for the two of us and that he could employ the young man's allowance in saying masses in his usual manner. He agreed willingly, and, having told him that he was lucky to be in my company, he said we could

walk in the garret for half an hour. I found this walk an excellent thing for my health and my plan of escape, which, however, I was not able to carry out till eleven months afterwards. At the end of this resort of rats I saw a number of old pieces of furniture thrown on the ground to the right and left of two great chests and in front of a large pile of papers sewn up into separate volumes. I helped myself to a dozen of them for the sake of the reading and found them to be accounts of trials and very diverting, for I was allowed to read these papers, which had once contained such secrets. I found some curious replies to the judges' questions respecting the seduction of maidens, gallantries carried a little too far by persons employed in girls' schools, facts relating to confessors who had abused their penitents, schoolmasters convicted of pederasty with their pupils, and guardians who had seduced their wards; some of the papers dating two or three centuries back, in which the style and the manners illustrated gave me considerable entertainment. Among the pieces of furniture on the floor I saw a warming-pan, a kettle, a fire shovel, a pair of tongs, some old candlesticks, some earthenware pots and even a syringe. From this I concluded that some prisoner of distinction had been allowed to make use of these articles. But what interested me most was a straight iron bar as thick as my thumb and about a foot and a half long. However, I left everything as it was, as my plans had not been sufficiently ripened by time for me to appropriate any object in particular.

One day towards the end of the month my companion was taken away, and Lawrence told me that he had been condemned to the prisons known as The Fours, which are within the same walls as the ordinary prisons but belong to the State Inquisitors. Those confined in them have the privilege of being able to call the gaoler when they like. The prisons are gloomy, but there is an oil lamp in the midst which gives the necessary light, and there is no fear of fire, as everything is made of marble. I heard a long time after that the unfortunate Maggiorin was there for five years and was afterwards sent to Cerigo for ten. I do not know whether he ever came from there. He had kept me good company, and this I discovered as soon as he was gone, for in a few days I became as melancholy as before. Fortunately I was still allowed my walk in the garret, and I began to examine its contents with more minuteness. One of the chests was full of fine papers, pieces of cardboard, uncut pens and clews of pack-thread; the other was nailed up. A piece of polished black marble, an inch thick, six inches long and three broad, attracted my attention, and I possessed myself of it without knowing what I was going to do with it and secreted it in my cell, covering it up with my shirts.

A week after Maggiorin had gone, Lawrence told me that in all probability I should soon get another companion. This fellow Lawrence, who at bottom was a mere gabbing fool, began to get uneasy at my never asking him questions. This fondness for gossip was not altogether appropriate to his office, but where is one to find things absolutely vile? There are such persons, but happily they are few and far between and

are not to be sought for in the lower orders. Thus my gaoler found himself unable to hold his tongue and thought that the reason I asked no questions must be that I thought him incapable of answering them, and, feeling hurt at this and wishing to prove to me that I made a mistake, he began to gossip without being solicited.

"I believe you will often have visitors," said he, "as the other six cells have each two prisoners, who are not likely to be sent to The Fours." I made him no reply, but he went on in a few seconds:

"They send to The Fours all sorts of people after they have been sentenced, though they know nothing of that. The prisoners whom I have charge of under The Leads are like yourself, persons of note, and are only guilty of deeds of which the inquisitive must know nothing. If you knew, sir, what sort of people shared your fate, you would be astonished. It's true that you are called a man of parts; but you will pardon me . . . You know that all men of parts are treated well here. You understand, fifty sous a day, that's something. They give three livres to a citizen, four to a gentleman and eight to a foreign count. I ought to know, I think, as everything goes through my hands."

He then commenced to sing his own praises, which consisted of negative clauses.

"I'm no thief nor traitor nor greedy nor malicious nor brutal, as all my predecessors were, and, when I have drunk a pint over and above, I am all the better for it. If my father had sent me to school, I should have learnt to read and write, and I might be Messer-Grande to-day, but that's not my fault. M. André Diedo has a high opinion of me. My wife, who cooks for you every day and is only twenty-four, goes to see him when she will, and he will have her come in without ceremony, even if he be in bed, and that's more than he'll do for a senator. I promise you, you will be always having the newcomers in your cell, but never for any length of time, for, as soon as the secretary has got what he wants to know from them, he sends them to their place—to The Fours, to some fort or to the Levant; and, if they be foreigners, they are sent across the frontier, for our government does not hold itself master of the subjects of other princes if they be not in its service. The clemency of the court is beyond compare; there's not another in the world that treats its prisoners so well. They say it's cruel to disallow writing and visitors; but that's foolish, for what are writing and company but waste of time? You will tell me that you have nothing to do, but we can't say as much."

Such was, almost word for word, the first harangue with which the fellow honoured me, and I must say I found it amusing. I saw that, if the man had been less of a fool, he would most certainly have been more of a scoundrel.

The next day brought me a new messmate, who was treated as Maggiorin had been, and I thus found it necessary to buy another ivory spoon, for, as the newcomers were given nothing on the first day of their imprisonment, I had to do all the honours of the cell.

My new mate made me a low bow, for my beard, now four inches

long, was still more imposing than my figure. Lawrence often lent me scissors to cut my nails, but he was forbidden, under pain of very heavy punishment, to let me touch my beard. I knew not the reason of this order, but I ended by becoming used to my beard as one gets used to everything.

The newcomer was a man of about fifty, approaching my size, a little bent, thin, with a large mouth and very bad teeth. He had small grey eyes hidden under thick eyebrows of a red colour, which made him look like an owl; and this picture was set off by a small black wig, which exhaled a disagreeable odour of oil, and by a dress of coarse grey cloth. He accepted my offer of dinner, but was reserved and said not a word the whole day, and I was also silent, thinking he would soon recover the use of his tongue, as he did the next day.

Early in the morning he was given a bed and a bag full of linen. The gaoler asked him, as he had asked me, what he would have for dinner and for money to pay for it.

"I have no money."

"What! a moneyed man like you without money?"

"I haven't a sou."

"Very good; in that case I will get you some army biscuits and water, according to instructions."

He went out and returned directly afterwards with a pound and a half of biscuit and a pitcher, which he set before the prisoner and then went away.

Left alone with this phantom I heard a sigh, and my pity made me break the silence.

"Don't sigh, sir; you shall share my dinner. But I think you have made a great mistake in coming here without money."

"I have some, but it does not do to let those harpies know of it."

"And so you condemn yourself to bread and water. Truly a wise proceeding! Do you know the reason of your imprisonment?"

"Yes, sir, and I will endeavour in a few words to inform you of it."

"My name is Squaldo Nobili. My father was a countryman who had me taught reading and writing and at his death left me his cottage and the small patch of ground belonging to it. I lived in Friuli, about a day's journey afoot from the town of Udine. As a torrent called Corno often damaged my little property, I determined to sell it and to set up in Venice, which I did ten years ago. I brought with me eight thousand livres in fair sequins, and, knowing that in this happy commonwealth all men enjoyed the blessings of liberty, I believed that, by utilising my capital, I might make a little income, and I began to lend money on security. Relying on my thrift, my judgment and my knowledge of the world, I chose this business in preference to all others. I rented a small house in the neighbourhood of the Royal Canal and, having furnished it, lived there in comfort by myself; and in the course of two years I found I had made a profit of ten thousand livres, though I had expended two thousand on household expenses, as I wished to live in comfort. In this fashion I saw myself in a fair way of making a

respectable fortune in time; but one day, having lent a Jew two sequins upon some books, I found one amongst them called *La Sagesse*, by Charron. It was then I found out how good a thing it is to be able to read, for this book, which you, sir, may not have read, contains all that a man need know, purging him of all the prejudices of his childhood. With Charron, goodbye to Hell and all the empty terrors of a future life; one's eyes are opened, one knows the way to bliss, one becomes wise indeed. Do you, sir, get this book and pay no heed to those foolish persons who would tell you this treasure is not to be approached."

This curious discourse made me know my man. As to Charron, I had read the book, though I did not know it had been translated into Italian. The author, who was a great admirer of Montaigne, thought to surpass his model but toiled in vain. He is not much read despite the prohibition to read his works, which should have given them some popularity. He had the impudence to give his book the title of one of Solomon's treatises, a circumstance which does not say much for his modesty. My companion went on as follows:

"Set free by Charron from any scruples I still might have and from those false ideas so hard to rid one's self of, I pushed my business in such sort that at the end of six years I could lay my hand on ten thousand sequins. There is no need for you to be astonished at that, as in this wealthy city gambling, debauchery and idleness set all the world awry and in continual need of money; so do the wise gather what the fool drops.

"Three years ago a certain Count Sériman came and asked me to take from him five hundred sequins, put them in my business and give him half the profits. All he asked for was an obligation in which I promised to return him the whole sum on demand. At the end of a year I sent him seventy-five sequins, which made fifteen per cent on his money; he gave me a receipt for it but was ill pleased. He was wrong, for I was in no need of money and had not used his for business purposes. At the end of the second year out of pure generosity I sent him the same amount; but we came to a quarrel and he demanded the return of the five hundred sequins. 'Certainly,' I said, 'but I must deduct the hundred and fifty you have already received.' Enraged at this, he served me with a writ for the payment of the whole sum. A clever lawyer undertook my defence and was able to gain me two years. Three months ago I was spoken to as to an agreement and refused to hear of it, but, fearing violence, I went to the Abbé Justiniani, the Spanish ambassador's secretary, and for a small sum he let me a house in the precincts of the Embassy, where one is safe from surprises. I was quite willing to let Count Sériman have his money, but I claimed a reduction of a hundred sequins on account of the costs of the lawsuit. A week ago the lawyers on both sides came to me. I showed them a purse of two hundred and fifty sequins and told them they might take it but not a penny more. They went away without saying a word, both wearing an ill-pleased air, of which I took no notice. Three days ago the Abbé Justiniani told me that the ambassador had thought fit to

give permission to the State Inquisitors to send their men at once to my house to make search therein. I thought the thing impossible under the shelter of a foreign ambassador, and, instead of taking the usual precautions, I awaited the approach of the men-at-arms, only putting my money in a place of safety. At daybreak Messer-Grande came to the house and asked me for three hundred and fifty sequins, and, on my telling him that I hadn't a farthing, he seized me, and here I am."

I shuddered, less at having such an infamous companion than at his evidently considering me as his equal, for, if he had thought of me in any other light, he would certainly not have told me this long tale, doubtless in the belief that I would take his part. In all the folly about Charron with which he tormented me in the three days we were together, I found by bitter experience the truth of the Italian proverb, *Guardati da colui che non ha letto che un libro solo*. By reading the work of the misguided priest, he had become an atheist, and of this he made his boast all the day long. In the afternoon Lawrence came to tell him to come and speak with the secretary. He dressed himself hastily, and, instead of his own shoes, he took mine without my seeing him. He came back in half an hour in tears and took out of his shoes two purses containing three hundred and fifty sequins, and, the gaoler going before, he went to take them to the secretary. A few moments afterwards he returned and, taking his cloak, went away. Lawrence told me that he had been set at liberty. I thought, and with good reason, that, to make him acknowledge his debt and pay it, the secretary had threatened him with the torture; and, if it were used only in similar cases, I, who detested the principle of torture, would be the first to proclaim its utility.

On New Year's Day, 1756, I received my presents. Lawrence brought me a dressing-gown lined with fox-skin, a coverlet of wadded silk and a bear-skin bag for me to put my legs in, which I welcomed gladly, for the coldness was as unbearable as the heat in August. Lawrence told me that I might spend to the amount of six sequins a month, that I might have what books I liked and take in the newspaper and that this present came from M. de Bragadin. I asked him for a pencil, and I wrote upon a scrap of paper: "I am grateful for the kindness of the Tribunal and the goodness of M. de Bragadin."

The man who would know what were my feelings at all this must have been in a similar situation to my own. In the first gush of feeling I forgave my oppressors and was on the point of giving up the idea of escape—so easily shall you move a man that you have brought low and overwhelmed with misfortune. Lawrence told me that M. de Bragadin had come before the three Inquisitors and that, on his knees and with tears in his eyes, he had entreated them to let him give me this mark of affection if I were still in the land of the living; the Inquisitors were moved and were not able to refuse his request.

I wrote down without delay the names of the books I wanted.

One fine morning, as I was walking in the garret, my eyes fell on the iron bar I have mentioned, and I saw that it might very easily

be made into a defensive or offensive weapon. I took possession of it and, having hidden it under my dressing-gown, conveyed it into my cell. As soon as I was alone, I took the piece of black marble and found that I had to my hand an excellent whetstone, for, by rubbing the bar with the stone, I obtained a very good edge.

My interest roused in this work, in which I was but an apprentice, and in the fashion in which I seemed likely to become possessed of an instrument totally prohibited under The Leads; impelled, perhaps, also by my vanity to make a weapon without any of the necessary tools; and incited by my very difficulties (for I worked away till dark without anything to hold my whetstone except my left hand and without a drop of oil to soften the iron), I made up my mind to persevere in my difficult task. My saliva served me in the stead of oil, and I toiled eight days to produce eight edges terminating in a sharp point, the edges being an inch and a half in length. My bar thus sharpened formed an eight-sided dagger and would have done justice to a first-rate cutler. No one can imagine the toil and trouble I had to bear nor the patience required to finish this difficult task without any other tools than a loose piece of stone. I put myself, in fact, to a kind of torture unknown to the tyrants of all ages. My right arm had become so stiff that I could hardly move it; the palm of my hand was covered with a large scar, the result of the numerous blisters caused by the hardness and the length of the work. No one would guess the sufferings I underwent to bring my work to completion.

Proud of what I had done, without thinking what use I could make of my weapon, my first care was to hide it in such a manner as would defy a minute search. After thinking over a thousand plans, to all of which there was some objection, I cast my eyes on my armchair, and there I contrived to hide it so as to be secure from all suspicion. Thus did Providence aid me to contrive a wonderful and almost inconceivable plan of escape. I confess to a feeling of vanity, not because I eventually succeeded (for I owed something to good luck) but because I was brave enough to undertake such a scheme in spite of the difficulties which might have ruined my plans and prevented my ever attaining liberty.

After thinking for three or four days as to what I should do with the bar I had made into an edged tool, as thick as a walking-stick and twenty inches long, I determined that the best plan would be to make a hole in the floor under my bed.

I was sure that the room below my cell was no other than the one in which I had seen M. Cavalli. I knew that this room was opened every morning, and I felt persuaded that, after I had made my hole, I could easily let myself down with my sheets, which I would make into a rope and fasten to my bed. Once there, I would hide under the table of the court, and in the morning, when the door was opened, I could escape and get to a place of safety before anyone could follow me. I thought it possible that a sentry might be placed in the hall, but my short pike ought to soon rid me of him. The floor might be of double

or even of triple thickness, and this thought puzzled me; for in that case how was I to prevent the guards sweeping out the room throughout the two months my work might last. If I forbade them to do so, I might rouse suspicion; all the more so as, to free myself of the fleas, I had requested them to sweep out the cell every day, and in sweeping they would soon discover what I was about. I must find some way out of the difficulty.

I began by forbidding them to sweep, without giving any reason. A week after Lawrence asked me why I did so. I told him because of the dust, which might make me cough violently and give me some fatal injury.

"I will make them water the floor," said he.

"That would be worse, Lawrence, for the damp might cause a plethora."

In this manner I obtained a week's respite, but at the end of that time the lout gave orders that my cell should be swept. He had the bed carried out into the garret, and, on pretense of having the sweeping done with greater care, he lighted a candle. This let me know that the rascal was suspicious of something; but I was crafty enough to take no notice of him, and so far from giving up my plea, I only thought how I could put it in good train. Next morning I pricked my finger and covered my handkerchief with the blood, and then awaited Lawrence in bed. As soon as he came I told him that I had coughed so violently as to break a blood vessel, which had made me bring up all the blood he saw. "Get me a doctor." The doctor came, ordered me to be bled and wrote me a prescription. I told him it was Lawrence's fault, as he had persisted in having the room swept. The doctor blamed him for doing so, and, just as if I had asked him, he told us of a young man who had died from the same cause and said that there was nothing more dangerous than breathing in dust. Lawrence called all the gods to witness that he had had the room swept only for my sake and promised it should not happen again. I laughed to myself, for the doctor could not have played his part better if I had given him the word. The guards who were there were delighted and said they would take care to sweep the cells only of those prisoners who had angered them.

When the doctor had gone, Lawrence begged my pardon and assured me that all the other prisoners were in good health, although their cells were swept out regularly.

"But what the doctor says is worth considering," said he, "and I shall tell them all about it, for I look upon them as my children."

The blood-letting did me good, as it made me sleep and relieved me of the spasms with which I was sometimes troubled. I had regained my appetite and was getting back my strength every day, but the time to set about my work was not yet come; it was too cold, and I could not hold the bar for any length of time without my hand becoming stiff. My scheme required much thought. I had to exercise boldness and foresight to rid myself of troubles which chance might bring to pass or

which I could foresee. The situation of a man who had to act as I had is an unhappy one, but in risking all for all half its bitterness vanishes.

The long nights of winter distressed me, for I had to pass nineteen mortal hours in darkness; and on the cloudy days, which are common enough in Venice, the light I had was not sufficient for me to be able to read. Without any distraction, I fell back on the idea of my escape, and a man who always thinks on one subject is in danger of becoming a monomaniac. A wretched kitchen lamp would have made me happy, but how was I to get such a thing? O blessed prerogative of thought! How happy was I when I thought I had found a way to possess myself of such a treasure! To make such a lamp I required a vase, wicks, oil, a flint and steel, tinder and matches. A porringer would do for the vase, and I had one which was used for cooking eggs in butter. Pretending that the common oil did not agree with me, I got them to buy me Lucca oil for my salad, and my cotton counterpane would furnish me with wicks. I then said I had the toothache and asked Lawrence to get me a pumice-stone, but, as he did not know what I meant, I told him that a musket flint would do as well if it were soaked in vinegar for a day; then, being applied to the tooth, the pain would be eased. Lawrence told me that the vinegar I had was excellent and I could soak the stone myself, and he gave me three or four flints he had in his pocket. All I had to do was to get some sulphur and tinder, and the procuring of these two articles set all my wits to work. At last fortune came to my assistance.

I had suffered from a kind of rash which, as it came off, had left some red spots on my arms and occasionally caused me some irritation. I told Lawrence to ask the doctor for a cure, and the next day he brought me a piece of paper which the secretary had seen and on which the doctor had written, "Regulate the food for a day, and the skin will be cured by four ounces of oil of sweet almonds or an ointment of flour of sulphur, but this local application is hazardous."

"Never mind the danger," said I to Lawrence. "Buy me the ointment, or rather get me the sulphur, as I have some butter by me, and I can make it up myself. Have you any matches? Give me a few."

He found some in his pockets, and he gave me them.

What a small thing brings comfort in distress! But in my place these matches were no small thing but rather a great treasure.

I had puzzled my head for several hours as to what substitute I could find for tinder, the only thing I still lacked, and which I could not ask for under any pretence whatsoever, when I remembered that I had told the tailor to put some under the armpits of my coat to prevent the perspiration spoiling the stuff. The coat, quite new, was before me, and my heart began to beat, but supposing the tailor had not put it in! Thus I hung between hope and fear. I had only to take a step to know all; but such a step would have been decisive, and I dared not take it. At last I drew nigh, and, feeling myself unworthy of such mercies, I fell on my knees and fervently prayed of God that the tailor might not have forgotten the tinder. After this heartfelt prayer I took

my coat, unsewed it and found—the tinder! My joy knew no bounds. I naturally gave thanks to God, since it was with confidence in Him that I had taken courage and searched my coat, and I returned thanks to Him with all my heart.

I now had all the necessary materials, and I soon made myself a lamp. Let the reader imagine my joy at having in a manner made light in the midst of darkness, and it was no less sweet because against the orders of my infamous oppressors. Now there was no more night for me and also no more salad, for, though I was very fond of it, the need of keeping the oil to give light caused me to make this sacrifice without it costing me many pangs. I fixed upon the first Monday in Lent to begin the difficult work of breaking through the floor, for I suspected that in the tumult of the carnival I might have some visitors, and I was in the right.

At noon, on Quinquagesima Sunday, I heard the noise of the bolts, and presently Lawrence entered, followed by a thickset man whom I recognized as the Jew, Gabriel Schalon, known for lending money to young men.

We knew each other, so exchanged compliments. His company was by no means agreeable to me, but my opinion was not asked. He began by congratulating me on having the pleasure of his society; and by way of answer I offered him to share my dinner, but he refused, saying he would take only a little soup and would keep his appetite for a better supper at his own house.

“When?”

“This evening. You heard, when I asked for my bed, he told me we would talk about that to-morrow. That means plainly that I shall have no need of it. And do you think it likely that a man like me would be left without anything to eat?”

“That was my experience.”

“Possibly, but, between ourselves, our cases are somewhat different; and, without going any farther into that question, the Inquisitors have made a mistake in arresting me, and they will be in some trouble, I am certain, as to how to atone for doing so.”

“They will possibly give you a pension. A man of your importance has to be conciliated.”

“True, there’s not a broker on the exchange more useful than myself, and the five sages have often profited by the advice I have given them. My detention is a curious incident, which, perchance, will be of service to you.”

“Indeed. How, may I ask?”

“I will get you out of here in a month’s time. I know to whom to speak and what way to do it.”

“I reckon on you, then.”

“You may do so.”

This knave and fool together believed himself to be somebody. He volunteered to inform me as to what was being said of me in the town, but, as he only related the idle tales of men as ignorant as himself,

he wearied me, and, to escape listening to him, I took up a book. The fellow had the impudence to ask me not to read, as he was very fond of talking, but thenceforth he talked only to himself. I did not dare to light my lamp before this creature, and, as night drew on, he decided on accepting some bread and Cyprus wine, and he was afterwards obliged to do as best he could with my mattress, which was now the common bed of all newcomers.

In the morning he had a bed and some food from his own house. I was burdened with this wretched fellow for two months, for, before condemning him to The Fours, the secretary had several interviews with him to bring to light his knaveries and oblige him to cancel a goodly number of illegal agreements. He confessed to me himself that he had bought of M. Domenico Micheli the right to moneys which could not belong to the buyer till after the father of the seller was dead. "It's true," said he, "that he agreed to give me fifty per cent, but you must consider that, if he died before his father, I should lose all." At last, seeing that my cursed fellow did not go, I determined to light my lamp again, having made him promise to observe secrecy. He kept his promise only while he was with me, as Lawrence knew all about it, but luckily he attached no importance to the fact.

This unwelcome guest was a true burden to me, as he prevented me not only from working for my escape but also from reading. He was troublesome, ignorant, superstitious, a braggart, cowardly and sometimes like a madman. He would have had me cry, since fear made him weep, and he said over and over again that his imprisonment would ruin his reputation. On this count I reassured him with a sarcasm he did not understand. I told him that his reputation was too well known to suffer anything from this little misfortune, and he took that for a compliment. He would not confess to being a miser, but I made him admit that, if the Inquisitor would give him a hundred sequins for every day of his imprisonment, he would gladly pass the rest of his life under The Leads.

He was a Talmudist, like all modern Jews, and he tried to make me believe that he was very devout; but I once extracted a smile of approbation from him by telling him that he would forswear Moses if the Pope would make him a cardinal. As the son of a rabbi, he was learned in all the ceremonies of his religion, but like most men he considered the essence of a religion to lie in its discipline and outward forms.

This Jew, who was extremely fat, passed three-quarters of his life in bed; and, though he often dozed in the daytime, he was annoyed at not being able to sleep at night, all the more so as he saw that I slept excellently. He once took it into his head to wake me up as I was enjoying my sleep.

"What do you want," said I, "waking me up with a start like this?"

"My dear fellow, I can't sleep a wink. Have compassion on me and let us have a little talk."

"You scoundrel! You act thus and you dare to call yourself my

friend! I know your lack of sleep torments you, but, if you again deprive me of the only blessing I enjoy, I will arise and strangle you."

I uttered these words in a kind of transport.

"Forgive me, for mercy's sake! and be sure that I will not trouble you again."

It is possible that I would not have strangled him, but I was very much tempted to do so. A prisoner who is lucky enough to sleep soundly, all the while he sleeps is no longer a captive and feels no more the weight of his chains. He ought to look upon the wretch who awakens him as a guard who deprives him of his liberty and makes him feel his misery once more, since, awakening, he feels all his former woes. Furthermore, the sleeping prisoner often dreams that he is free again, in like manner as the wretch dying of hunger sees himself in dreams seated at a sumptuous feast.

I congratulated myself on not having commenced my great work before he came, especially as he required that the room should be swept out. The first time he asked for it to be done, the guards made me laugh by saying it would kill me. However, he insisted, and I had my revenge by pretending to be ill, but from interested motives I made no further opposition.

On the Wednesday in Holy Week Lawrence told us that the secretary would make us the customary visit in the afternoon, the object being to give peace to them that would receive the sacrament at Easter and also to know if they had anything to say against the gaoler. "So, gentlemen," said Lawrence, "if you have any complaints to make of me, make them. Dress yourselves fully, as is customary." I told Lawrence to get me a confessor for the next day.

I put myself into full dress, and the Jew followed my example, taking leave of me in advance, so sure was he that the secretary would set him free on hearing what he had to say. "My presentiment," said he, "is of the same kind as I have had before, and I have never been deceived."

"I congratulate you, but don't reckon without your host." He did not understand what I meant.

In course of time the secretary came, and, as soon as the cell door was opened, the Jew ran out and threw himself at his feet on both knees. I heard for five minutes nothing but his tears and complaints, for the secretary said not one word. He came back, and Lawrence told me to go out. With a beard of eight months' growth and a dress made for love-making in August, I must have presented a somewhat curious appearance. Much to my disgust, I shivered with cold and was afraid that the secretary would think I was trembling with fear. As I was obliged to bend low to come out of my hole, my bow was ready made, and, drawing myself up, I looked at him calmly without affecting any unreasonable hardihood and waited for him to speak. The secretary also kept silence, so that we stood facing each other like a pair of statues. At the end of two minutes, the secretary, seeing that I said nothing, gave me a slight bow and went away. I re-entered my cell, and, taking

off my clothes in haste, got into bed to get warm again. The Jew was astonished at my not having spoken to the secretary, although my silence had cried more loudly than his cowardly complaints. A prisoner of my kind has no business to open his mouth before his judge, except to answer questions. On Maundy Thursday a Jesuit came to confess me, and on Holy Saturday a priest of St. Mark's came to administer to me the Holy Communion. My confession appearing rather too laconic to the sweet son of Ignatius, he thought good to remonstrate with me before giving me his absolution.

"Do you pray to God?" he said.

"From the morning unto the evening and from the evening unto the morning, for, placed as I am, all that I feel—my anxiety, my grief, all the wanderings of my mind—can be but a prayer in the eyes of the Divine Wisdom which alone sees my heart."

The Jesuit smiled slightly and replied by a discourse rather metaphysical than moral, which did not at all tally with my views. I should have confuted him on every point if he had not astonished me by a prophecy he made. "Since it is from us," said he, "that you learnt what you know of religion, practise it in our fashion, pray like us and know that you will come out of this place only on the day of the saint whose name you bear." So saying, he gave me absolution and left me. This man left the strongest possible impression on my mind. I did my best but could not rid myself of it. I proceeded to pass in review all the saints in the calendar.

The Jesuit was the director of M. Flaminio Corner, an old senator and then a State Inquisitor. This statesman was a famous man of letters, a great politician, highly religious and author of several pious and ascetic works written in Latin. His reputation was spotless.

On being informed that I should be set free on the feast-day of my patron saint and thinking that my informant ought to know for certain what he told me, I felt glad to have a patron saint.

"But which is it?" I asked myself. "It cannot be St. James of Compostella, whose name I bear, for it was on the feast-day of that saint that Messer-Grande burst open my door." I took the almanac and, looking for the saints' days nearest at hand, I found St. George, a saint of some note, but of whom I had never thought. I then devoted myself to St. Mark, whose feast fell on the twenty-fifth of the month and whose protection as a Venetian I might justly claim. To him, then, I addressed my vows but all in vain, for his feast came round and still I was in prison. Then I took myself to St. James, the brother of Christ, who comes before St. Philip, but again in the wrong. I tried St. Anthony, who, if the tale told at Padua be true, worked thirteen miracles a day. He worked none for me. Thus I passed from one to the other, and by degrees I got to hope in the protection of the saints just as one hopes for anything one desires but does not expect to come to pass; and I finished up by hoping only in my St. Bar and in the strength of my arms. Nevertheless the promise of the Jesuit came to pass, since I escaped from The Leads on All Hallows Day; and it is certain that,

if I had a patron saint, he must be looked for in their number, since they are all honoured on that day.

A fortnight after Easter I was delivered from my troublesome Israelite, and the poor devil, instead of being sent back to his home, had to spend two years in The Fours, and, on his gaining his freedom, he went and set up in Trieste, where he ended his days.

No sooner was I again alone than I set zealously about my work. I had to make haste for fear of some new visitor, who, like the Jew, might insist on the cell being swept. I began by drawing back my bed, and, after lighting my lamp, I lay down on my belly, my pike in my hand, with a napkin close by in which to gather the fragments of board as I scooped them out. My task was to destroy the board by dint of driving into it the point of my tool. At first the pieces I got away were not much larger than grains of wheat, but they soon increased in size.

The board was made of deal and was sixteen inches broad. I began to pierce it at its juncture with another board, and, as there were no nails or clamps, my work was simple. After six hours' toil I tied up the napkin and put it on one side, to empty it the following day behind the pile of papers in the garret. The fragments were four or five times larger in bulk than the hole from whence they came. I put back my bed in its place, and, on emptying the napkin the next morning, I took care so to dispose the fragments that they should not be seen.

Having broken through the first board, which I found to be two inches thick, I was stopped by a second which I judged to be as thick as the first. Tormented by the fear of new visitors, I redoubled my efforts and in three weeks had pierced the three boards of which the floor was composed; and then I thought that all was lost, for I found I had to pierce a bed of small pieces of marble known at Venice as *terrazzo marmorin*. This forms the usual floor of Venetian houses of all kinds, except the cottages, for even the high nobility prefer the *terrazzo* to the finest boarded floor. I was thunderstruck to find that my bar made no impression on this composition; but, nevertheless, I was not altogether discouraged and cast down. I remembered Hannibal, who, according to Livy, opened up a passage through the Alps by breaking the rocks with axes and other instruments, having previously softened them with vinegar. I thought that Hannibal had succeeded not by *aceto*, but *aceta*, which in the Latin of Padua might well be the same as *ascia*; and who can guarantee the text to be free from the blunders of the copyist? All the same, I poured into the hole a bottle of strong vinegar I had by me, and in the morning, either because of the vinegar or because I, refreshed and rested, put more strength and patience into the work, I saw that I should overcome this new difficulty; for I had not to break the pieces of marble, but only to pulverise with the end of my bar the cement which kept them together. I soon perceived that the greatest difficulty was on the surface, and in four days the whole mosaic was destroyed without the point of my pike being at all damaged.

Below the pavement I found another plank, but I had expected as much. I concluded that this would be the last; that is the first to be put down when the rooms below were being ceiled. I pierced it with some difficulty, as, the hole being ten inches deep, it had become troublesome to work the pike. A thousand times I commended myself to the mercy of God. Those freethinkers who say that praying is no good do not know what they are talking about, for I know by experience that, having prayed to God, I always felt myself grow stronger, which fact amply proves the usefulness of prayer, whether the renewal of strength comes straight from God or only from the trust one has in Him.

On the twenty-fifth of June, on which day the Republic celebrates the wonderful appearance of St. Mark under the form of a winged lion in the ducal church, about three o'clock in the afternoon, as I was labouring on my belly at the hole, stark naked, covered with sweat, my lamp beside me, I heard with mortal fear the shriek of a bolt and the noise of the door of the first passage. It was a fearful moment! I blew out my lamp, and, leaving my bar in the hole, I threw into it the napkin with the shavings it contained, and as swift as lightning I replaced my bed as best I could and threw myself on it just as the door of my cell opened. If Lawrence had come in two seconds sooner, he would have caught me. He was about to walk over me, but, crying out dolefully, I stopped him, and he fell back, saying:

"Truly, sir, I pity you, for the air here is as hot as a furnace. Get up and thank God for giving you such good company."

"Come in, my lord, come in," said he to the poor wretch who followed him. Then, without heeding my nakedness, the fellow made the noble gentleman enter, and he, seeing me to be naked, sought to avoid me while I vainly tried to find my shirt.

The newcomer thought he was in Hell and cried out, "Where am I? My God! where have I been put? What heat! What a stench! With whom am I?"

Lawrence made him go out and asked me to put on my shirt and go into the garret for a moment. Addressing himself to the new prisoner, he said that, having to get a bed and other necessities, he would leave us in the garret till he came back and that in the meantime the cell would be freed from the bad smell, which was only oil. What a start it gave me as I heard him utter the word "oil." In my hurry I had forgotten to snuff the wick after blowing it out. As Lawrence asked me no questions about it, I concluded that he knew all, and the accursed Jew must have betrayed me. I thought myself lucky that he was not able to tell him any more.

From that time the repulsion which I had felt for Lawrence disappeared.

After putting on my shirt and dressing-gown, I went out and found my new companion engaged in writing a list of what he wanted the gaoler to get him. As soon as he saw me, he exclaimed, "Ah! it's Casanova." I, too, recognised him as the Abbé and Count Fenarolo,

a man of fifty, amiable, rich and a favourite in society. He embraced me, and, when I told him that I should have expected to see anybody in that place rather than him, he could not keep back his tears, which made me weep also.

When we were alone, I told him that, as soon as his bed came, I should offer him the recess, begging him at the same time not to accept it. I asked him, also, not to ask to have the cell swept, saying that I would tell him the reason another time. He promised to keep all secrecy in the matter and said he thought himself fortunate to be placed with me. He said that, as no one knew why I was imprisoned, everyone was guessing at it. Some said that I was the heresiarch of a new sect; others that Madame Memmo had persuaded the Inquisitors that I had made her sons atheists, and others that Antony Condulmer, the State Inquisitor, had me imprisoned as a disturber of the peace because I hissed Abbé Chiari's plays and had formed a design to go to Padua for the express purpose of killing him.

All these accusations had a certain foundation in fact which gave them an air of truth, but in reality they were all wholly false. I cared too little for religion to trouble myself to found a new one. The sons of Madame Memmo were full of wit and more likely to seduce than to be seduced; and Master Condulmer would have had too much on his hands if he had imprisoned all those who hissed the Abbé Chiari; and as for this abbé, once a Jesuit, I had forgiven him, as the famous Father Origo, himself formerly a Jesuit, had taught me to take my revenge by praising him everywhere, which incited the malicious to vent their satire on the abbé; and thus I was avenged without any trouble to myself.

In the evening they brought a good bed, fine linen, perfumes, an excellent supper and choice wines. The abbé ate nothing, but I supped for two. When Lawrence had wished us good-night and had shut us up till the next day, I got out my lamp, which I found to be empty, the napkin having sucked up all the oil. This made me laugh, for, as the napkin might very well have caught and set the room on fire, the idea of the confusion which would have ensued excited my hilarity. I imparted the cause of my mirth to my companion, who laughed himself, and then, lighting the lamp, we spent the night in pleasant talk. The history of his imprisonment was as follows:

"Yesterday, at three o'clock in the afternoon, Madame Alessandria, Count Martinengo and myself got into a gondola. We went to Padua to see the opera, intending to return to Venice afterwards. In the second act my evil genius led me to the gaming-table, where I unfortunately saw Count Rosenberg, the Austrian ambassador, without his mask, and about ten paces from him was Madame Ruzzini, whose husband is going to Vienna to represent the Republic. I greeted them both and was just going away when the ambassador called out to me, so as to be heard by everyone, 'You are very fortunate in being able to pay your court to so sweet a lady. At present the personage I represent makes the fairest land in the world no better for me than

a galley. Tell the lady, I beseech you, that the laws which now prevent me speaking to her will be without force in Vienna, where I shall go next year, and then I shall declare war against her.' Madame Ruzzini, who saw that she was being spoken of, asked me what the count had said, and I told her, word for word. 'Tell him,' said she, 'that I accept his declaration of war and that we shall see who will wage it best.' I did not think I had committed a crime in reporting her reply, which was after all a mere compliment. After the opera we set out and got here at midnight. I was going to sleep when a messenger brought me a note ordering me to go to the Bussola at one o'clock, Signor Bussinello, Secretary of the Council of Ten, having something to say to me. Astonished at such an order—always of bad omen—and vexed at being obliged to obey, I went at the time appointed, and my lord secretary, without giving me a word, ordered me to be taken here."

Certainly no fault could be less criminal than that which Count Fenarolo had committed, but one can break certain laws in all innocence without being any the less punishable. I congratulated him on knowing what his crime had been and told him that he would be set free in a week and would be requested to spend six months in the Bressian. "I can't think," said he, "that they will leave me here for a week." I determined to keep him good company and to soften the bitterness of his imprisonment, and so well did I sympathise with his position that I forgot all about my own.

The next morning at daybreak Lawrence brought coffee and a basket filled with all the requisites for a good dinner. The abbé was astonished, for he could not conceive how anyone could eat at such an early hour. They let us walk for an hour in the garret and then shut us up again, and we saw no more of them throughout the day. The fleas which tormented us made the abbé ask why I did not have the cell swept out. I could not let him think that dirt and untidiness were agreeable to me or that my skin was any harder than his own, so I told him the whole story and showed him what I had done. He was vexed at having, as it were, forced me to make him my confidant, but he encouraged me to go on and, if possible, to finish what I was about that day, as he said he would help me to descend and then would draw up the rope, not wishing to complicate his own difficulties by an escape. I showed him the model of a contrivance by means of which I could certainly get possession of the sheets which were to be my rope; it was a short stick attached by one end to a long piece of thread. By this stick I intended to attach my rope to the bed, and as the thread hung down to the floor of the room below, as soon as I got there, I should pull the thread and the rope would fall down. He tried it and congratulated me on my invention, as this was a necessary part of my scheme, for otherwise the rope hanging down would have immediately betrayed me. My noble companion was convinced that I ought to stop my work, for I might be surprised, having to do several days' work before finishing the hole which would cost Lawrence his life. Should

the thought of gaining my liberty at the expense of such a creature have made me desist? I should still have persisted if my escape had meant death to the whole body of Venetian guards and even to the Inquisitors themselves. Can the love of country, all holy though it be, prevail in the heart of the man whose country is oppressing him?

My good humour did not prevent my companion having some bad quarters of an hour. He was in love with Madame Alessandria, who had been a singer, and was either the mistress or the wife of his friend Martinengo; and he should have deemed himself happy, but, the happier a lover is, so much the more unhappy he when he is snatched from the beloved object. He sighed, wept and declared that he loved a woman in whom all the noble virtues were contained. I compassionated him and took care not to comfort him by saying that love is a mere trifle, a cold piece of comfort given to lovers by fools—and, moreover, it is not true that love is a mere trifle.

The week I had mentioned as the probable term of his imprisonment passed quickly enough, and I lost my friend, but did not waste my time by mourning for him; he was set free, and I was content. I did not beg him to be discreet, for the least doubt on that score would have wounded his noble spirit. During the week he was with me, he ate only soup and fruit, taking a little Canary wine. It was I who made good cheer in his stead and greatly to his delight. Before he left, we swore eternal friendship.

The next day Lawrence gave me an account of my money, and, on finding that I had a balance of four sequins, I gave them to him, telling him it was a present from me to his wife. I did not tell him that it was for the rent of my lamp, but he was as free to think so if he chose.

Again betaking myself to my work and toiling without cessation, on the twenty-third of August I saw it finished. This delay was caused by an unavoidable accident. As I was hollowing out the last plank, I put my eye to a little hole through which I ought to have seen the hall of the Inquisitors—in fact, I did see it, but I saw also at one side of the hole a surface about eight inches thick. It was, as I had feared all the time it would be, one of the beams which kept up the ceiling. I was thus compelled to enlarge my hole on the other side, for the beam would have made it so narrow that a man of my size could never have got through. I increased the hole therefore by a fourth, working between fear and hope, for it was possible that the space between two of the beams would not be large enough. After I had finished, a second little hole assured me that God had blessed my labour. I then carefully stopped up the two small holes to prevent anything falling down into the hall and also lest a ray from my lamp should be perceived, for this would have disclosed all and ruined me.

I fixed my escape for the eve of St. Augustine's Day because I knew that the Grand Council assembled on that feast and there would consequently be nobody near the room through which I must pass in getting away. This would have been on the twenty-seventh of the

month, but a misfortune happened to me on the twenty-fifth which makes me still shudder when I think of it, notwithstanding the years which have passed since then.

Precisely at noon I heard the noise of bolts, and I thought I should die, for a violent beating of the heart made me imagine my last hour was come. I fell into my easy chair and waited. Lawrence came into the garret and put his head at the grating and said, "I give you joy, sir, for the good news I am bringing you." At first, not being able to think of any other news which could be good for me, I fancied I had been set at liberty, and I trembled, for I knew that the discovery of the hole I had made would cause my pardon to be recalled.

Lawrence came in and told me to follow him.

"Wait till I put on my clothes."

"It's of no consequence, as you have only to walk from this abominable cell to another, well lighted and quite fresh, with two windows whence you can see half Venice, and you can stand upright too..." I could bear no more, I felt that I was fainting.

"Give me vinegar," said I, "and go and tell the secretary that I thank the court for this favour and entreat it to leave me where I am."

"You make me laugh, sir. Have you gone mad? They would take you from Hell to put you in Heaven, and you would refuse to stir? Come, come, the court must be obeyed; pray rise, sir. I will give you my arm and will have your clothes and your books brought for you."

Seeing that resistance was of no avail, I got up and was much comforted at hearing him give orders for my armchair to be brought, for my pike was to follow me and with it hope. I should have much liked to have been able to take the hole—the object of so much wasted trouble and hope—with me. I may say with truth that, as I came forth from that horrible and doleful place, my spirit remained there.

Leaning on Lawrence's shoulder, while he, thinking to cheer me up, cracked his foolish jokes, I passed through two narrow passages and, going down three steps, found myself in a well lighted hall, at the end of which, on the left-hand side, was a door leading into another passage, two feet broad by about twelve long, and in the corner was my new cell. It had a barred window which was opposite to two windows, also barred, which lighted the passage, and thus one had a fine view as far as the Lido. At that trying moment I did not care much for the view; but later on I found that a sweet and pleasant wind came through the window when it was opened and tempered the insufferable heat; and this was a true blessing for the poor wretch who had to breathe the sultry prison air, especially in the hot season.

As soon as I got into my new cell, Lawrence had my armchair brought in, and went away, saying that he would have the remainder of my effects brought to me. I sat on my armchair as motionless as a statue, waiting for the storm, but not fearing it. What overwhelmed me was the distressing idea that all my pains and contrivances were of no use; nevertheless I felt neither sorry nor repentant for what

I had done, and I made myself abstain from thinking of what was going to happen, and thus kept myself calm.

Lifting up my soul to God, I could not help thinking that this misfortune was a Divine punishment for neglecting to escape when all was ready. Nevertheless, though I could have escaped three days sooner, I thought my punishment too severe, all the more so, as I had put off my escape from motives of prudence, which seemed to me worthy of reward, for, if I had consulted only my own impatience to be gone, I should have risked everything. To controvert the reasons which made me postpone my flight to the 27th of August, a special revelation would have been requisite; and, though I had read *Mary of Agradá*, I was not mad enough for that.

CHAPTER 51

I WAS thus anxious and despairing when two of the guards brought me my bed. They went back to fetch the rest of my belongings, and for two hours I saw no one, although the door of my cell remained open. This unnatural delay engendered many thoughts, but I could not fix exactly on the reason of it. I knew only that I had everything to fear, and this knowledge made me brace up my mind so that I should be able to meet calmly all possible misfortunes.

Besides The Leads and The Fours, the State Inquisitors also possess certain horrible subterranean cells beneath the ducal palace, where are sent men whom they do not wish to put to death, though they be thought worthy of it.

These subterranean prisons are precisely like tombs, but they call them "wells" because they always contain two feet of water, which penetrates from the sea by the same grating by which light is given, this grating being only a square foot in size. If the unfortunates condemned to live in these sewers do not wish to take a bath of filthy water, they have to remain all day seated on a trestle, which serves them for both bed and cupboard. In the morning they are given a pitcher of water, some thin soup and a ration of army bread, which they have to eat immediately or it becomes the prey of the enormous water rats who swarm in those dreadful abodes. Usually the wretches condemned to The Wells are imprisoned there for life, and there have been prisoners who have attained a great age. A villain who died whilst I was under The Leads had passed thirty-seven years in The Wells, and he was forty-four when sentenced. Knowing that he deserved death, it is possible that he took his imprisonment as a favour, for there are men who fear nought save death. His name was Béguelin. A Frenchman by birth, he had served in the Venetian army during the last war against the Turks in 1716, under the command of Field-Marshal the Count of Schulenbourg, who made the Grand Vizier raise the siege of Corfu. This Béguelin was the marshal's spy. He disguised himself as a Turk and penetrated into the Mussulman quarters, but

at the same time he was also in the service of the Grand Vizier, and, being detected in this course, he had reason to be thankful for being allowed to die in The Wells. The rest of his life must have been divided between weariness and hunger, but no doubt he often said, *Dum vita superest bene est.*

I have seen at Spiegelberg, in Moravia, prisons fearful in another way. There mercy sends the prisoners under sentence of death, and not one of them ever survives a year of imprisonment. What mercy!

During the two mortal hours of suspense, full of sombre thoughts and the most melancholy ideas, I could not help fancying that I was going to be plunged into one of these horrible dens, where the wretched inhabitants feed on idle hopes or become the prey of panicky fears. The Tribunal might well send him to Hell who had endeavoured to escape from Purgatory.

At last I heard hurried steps, and I soon saw Lawrence standing before me, transformed with rage, foaming at the mouth and blaspheming God and His saints. He began by ordering me to give him the hatchet and the tools I had used to pierce the floor and to tell him from which of the guards I had got the tools. Without moving and quite calmly, I told him that I did not know what he was talking about. At this reply he gave orders that I should be searched, but, rising with a determined air, I shook my fist at the knaves, and, having taken off my clothes, I said to them, "Do your duty, but let no one touch me."

They searched my mattress, turned my bed inside out, felt the cushion of my armchair and found—nothing.

"You won't tell me, then, where are the instruments with which you made the hole. It's of no matter, as we shall find a way to make you speak."

"If it be true that I have made a hole at all, I shall say that you gave me the tools and that I have returned them to you."

At this threat, which made his followers smile with glee, probably because he had been abusing them, he stamped his feet, tore his hair and went out like one possessed. The guards returned and brought me all my properties, the whetstone and lamp excepted. After locking up my cell, he shut the two windows which gave me a little air. I thus found myself confined in a narrow space without the possibility of receiving the least breath of air from any quarter. Nevertheless, my situation did not disturb me to any great extent, as I must confess I thought I had got off cheaply. In spite of his training, Lawrence had not thought of turning the armchair over; and thus, finding myself still possessor of the iron bar, I thanked Providence and thought myself still at liberty to regard the bar as a means by which sooner or later I should make my escape.

I passed a sleepless night, as much from the heat as the change in my prospects. At daybreak Lawrence came and brought some insufferable wine and some water I should not have cared to drink. All the rest was of a piece; dry salad, putrid meat and bread harder than

English biscuit. He cleaned nothing, and, when I asked him to open the windows, he seemed not to hear me; but a guard armed with an iron bar began to sound all over my room, against the wall, on the floor and, above all, under my bed. I looked on with an unmoved expression, but it did not escape my notice that the guard did not sound the ceiling. "That way," said I to myself, "will lead me out of this place of torments." But, for any such project to succeed, I should have to depend purely on chance, for all my operations would leave visible traces. The cell was quite new, and the least scratch would have attracted the notice of my keepers.

I passed a terrible day, for the heat was like that of a furnace and I was quite unable to make any use of the food with which I had been provided. The perspiration and the lack of nourishment made me so weak that I could neither walk nor read. Next day my dinner was the same; the horrible smell of the veal the rascal brought me made me draw back from it instantly. "Have you received orders," said I, "to kill me with hunger and heat?" He locked the door and went out without a word. On the third day I was treated in the same manner. I asked for a pencil and paper to write to the secretary. Still no answer.

In despair I ate my soup, and then, soaking my bread in a little Cyprus wine, I resolved to get strength to avenge myself on Lawrence by plunging my pike into his throat. My rage told me that I had no other course, but I grew calmer in the night, and in the morning, when the scoundrel appeared, I contented myself with saying that I would kill him as soon as I was at liberty. He only laughed at my threat and again went out without opening his lips.

I began to think that he was acting under orders from the secretary, to whom he must have told all. I knew not what to do. I strove between patience and despair and felt as if I were dying for want of food. At last, on the eighth day, with rage in my heart and in a voice of thunder, I bade him, under the name of "hangman" and in the presence of the archers, to give me an account of my money. He answered drily that I should have it the next day. Then, as he was about to go, I took my bucket and made as if I would go and empty it in the passage. Foreseeing my design, he told a guard to take it and, during the disgusting operation, opened a window, which he shut as soon as the affair was done, so that, in spite of my remonstrances, I was left in the plague-stricken atmosphere. I determined to speak to him still worse the next day; but, as soon as he appeared, my anger cooled, for, before giving me the account of my money, he presented me with a basket of lemons which M. de Bragadin had sent me, also a large bottle of water which seemed drinkable and a nice roasted fowl; and, besides this, one of the guards opened the two windows. When he gave me the account, I looked only at the sum total and told him to give the balance to his wife, with the exception of a sequin which I told him to give the guards who were with him. I thus made friends with these fellows, who thanked me heartily.

Lawrence, who remained alone with me on purpose spoke as follows:
"You have already told me, sir, that I myself furnished you with the tools to make that enormous hole, and I will ask no more about it; but would you kindly tell me where you got the materials to make a lamp?"

"From you."

"Well, for the moment, sir, I'm dashed, for I did not think that 'wit' meant 'impudence'."

"I am not telling you any lies. You it was who with your own hands gave me all the requisites—oil, flint and matches; the rest I had by me."

"You are right; but can you show me as simply that I gave you the tools to make that hole?"

"Certainly, for you are the only person who has given me anything."

"Lord have mercy upon me! what do I hear? Tell me, then, how I gave you a hatchet?"

"I will tell you the whole story and I will speak the truth, but only in the presence of the secretary."

"I don't wish to know any more, and I believe everything you say. I only ask you to say nothing about it, as I am a poor man with a family to provide for." He went out with his head between his hands.

I congratulated myself on having found a way to make the rascal afraid of me; he thought I knew enough to hang him. I saw that his own interest would keep him from saying anything to his superiors about the matter.

I had told Lawrence to bring me the works of Maffei, but the expense displeased him, though he did not dare to say so. He asked me what I could want with books with so many to my hand.

"I have read them all," I said, "and want some fresh ones."

"I will get someone who is here to lend you his books if you will lend yours in return; thus you will save your money."

"Perhaps the books are romances, for which I do not care."

"They are scientific works; and, if you think yours is the only long head here, you are very much mistaken."

"Very good, we shall see. I will lend this book to the 'long head,' and do you bring me one from him."

I had given him Petau's *Rationarium*, and in four minutes he brought me the first volume of Wolff's work. Well pleased with it, I told him, much to his delight, that I would do without Maffei.

Less pleased with the learned reading than at the opportunity to begin a correspondence with someone who might help me in my plan to escape (which I had already sketched out in my head), I opened the book as soon as Lawrence was gone and was overjoyed to find on one of the leaves the maxim of Seneca, *Calamitosus est animus futuri anxius*, paraphrased in six elegant verses. I made another six on the spot, and this is the way in which I contrived to write them. I had let the nail of my little finger grow long, to serve as an ear-pick; I cut it to a point and made a pen of it. I had no ink, and I was going to prick myself and write in my blood when I bethought me that the

juice of some mulberries I had by me would be an excellent substitute for ink. Besides the six verses, I wrote out a list of my books and put it in the back of the same book. It must be understood that Italian books are generally bound in parchment and in such a way that, when the book is opened, the back becomes a kind of pocket. On the title-page I wrote, "*Latet.*" I was anxious to get an answer, so the next day I told Lawrence that I had read the book and wanted another; and in a few minutes the second volume was in my hands.

As soon as I was alone, I opened the book and found a loose leaf with the following communication in Latin:

"Both of us are in the same prison, and to both of us it must be pleasant to find how the ignorance of our gaoler procures us a privilege before unknown to such a place. I, Marin Balbi, who write to you, am a Venetian of high birth and a regular cleric, and my companion is Count André Asquin, of Udine, the capital of Friuli. He begs me to inform you that all the books in his possession, of which you will find a list at the back of this volume, are at your service; but we warn you that we must use all possible care to prevent our correspondence being discovered by Lawrence."

In our position there was nothing wonderful in our both pitching on the idea of sending each other the catalogues of our small libraries or in our choosing the same hiding-place—the back of the books. All this was plain common sense, but the advice to be careful contained on the loose leaf struck me with some astonishment. It seemed next to impossible that Lawrence should leave the book unopened, but, if he had opened it, he would have seen the leaf, and, not knowing how to read, he would have kept it in his pocket till he could get someone to tell him the contents, and thus all would have been strangled at its birth. This made me think that my correspondent was an arrant blockhead.

After reading through the list, I wrote who I was, how I had been arrested, my ignorance as to what crime I had committed and my hope of soon becoming free. Balbi wrote me a letter of sixteen pages, in which he gave me the history of all his misfortunes. He had been four years in prison, and the reason was that he had enjoyed the good graces of three girls, by whom he had three children, all of whom he baptised under his own name.

The first time his superior had let him off with an admonition, the second time he was threatened with punishment and on the third and last occasion he was imprisoned. The Father Superior of his convent brought him his dinner every day. He told me in his letter that both the Superior and the Tribunal were tyrants, since they had no lawful authority over his conscience; that, being sure that the three children were his, he thought himself constrained as a man of honour not to deprive them of the advantage of bearing his name. He finished by telling me that he had found himself obliged to recognise his children to prevent slander attributing them to others, which would have injured the reputation of the three respectable girls who bore them;

and besides he could not stifle the voice of nature, which spoke so well on behalf of these little ones. His last words were, "There is no danger of the Superior falling into the same fault, as he confines his attention to the boys."

This letter made me know my man. Eccentric, sensual, a bad logician, vicious, a fool, indiscreet and ungrateful, all this appeared in his letter, for, after telling me that he should be badly off without Count Asquin, who was seventy years old and had books and money, he devoted two pages to abusing him, telling me of his faults and follies. In society I should have had nothing more to do with a man of his character, but under The Leads I was obliged to put everything to some use. I found in the back of the book a pencil, pens and paper, and I was thus enabled to write at my ease.

He told me also the history of the prisoners who were under The Leads and of those who had been there since his imprisonment. He said that the guard who secretly brought him whatever he wanted was called Nicolas, he also told me the names of the prisoners and what he knew about them, and, to convince me, he gave me the history of the hole I had made. It seems I had been taken from my cell to make room for the patrician Priuli and that Lawrence had taken two hours to repair the damage I had done and that he had imparted the secret to the carpenter, the blacksmith and all the guards under pain of death if they revealed it. "In another day," the guard had said, "Casanova would have escaped and Lawrence would have swung, for, though he pretended great astonishment when he saw the hole, there can be no doubt that he and no other provided the tools."

"Nicolas has told me," added my correspondent, "that M. de Bragadin has promised him a thousand sequins if he will aid you to make your escape, but that Lawrence, who knows of it, hopes to get the money without risking his neck, his plan being to obtain your liberty by means of the influence of his wife with M. Diedo. None of the guards dare to speak of what happened, for fear Lawrence might get himself out of the difficulty and take his revenge by having them dismissed." He begged me to tell him all the details and how I got the tools and to count upon his keeping the secret.

I had no doubts as to his curiosity, but many as to his discretion, and this very request showed him to be the most indiscreet of men. Nevertheless, I concluded that I must make use of him, for he seemed to me the kind of man to assist me in my escape. I began to write an answer to him, but a sudden suspicion made me keep back what I had written. I fancied that the correspondence might be a mere artifice of Lawrence's to find out who had given me the tools and what I had done with them. To satisfy him without compromising myself, I told him that I had made the hole with a strong knife in my possession, which I had placed on the window-ledge in the passage. In less than three days this false confidence of mine made me feel secure, as Lawrence did not go to the window, as he would certainly have done if the letter had been intercepted. Furthermore, Father

Balbi told me that he could understand how I might have a knife, as Lawrence had told him that I had not been searched previous to my imprisonment. Lawrence himself had received no orders to search me, and this circumstance might have stood him in good stead if I had succeeded in escaping, as all prisoners handed over to him by the captain of the guard were supposed to have been searched already. On the other hand, Messer-Grande might have said that, having seen me get out of my bed, he was sure that I had no weapons about me, and thus both of them would have got out of trouble. The monk ended by begging me to send him my knife by Nicolas, on whom I might rely.

The monk's thoughtlessness seemed to me almost incredible. I wrote and told him that I was not at all inclined to put my trust in Nicolas and that my secret was one not to be imparted in writing. However, I was amused by his letters. In one of them he told me why Count Asquin was kept under The Leads, in spite of his helplessness, for he was enormously fat, and, as he had a broken leg which had been badly set, he could hardly put one foot before another. It seems that the count, not being a very wealthy man, followed the profession of a barrister at Udine, and in that capacity defended the country-folk against the nobility, who wished to deprive the peasants of their vote in the assembly of the province. The claims of the farmers disturbed the public peace, and, by way of bringing them to reason, the nobles had recourse to the State Inquisitors, who ordered the count-barrister to abandon his clients. The count replied that the municipal law authorised him to defend the constitution, and would not give in; whereon the Inquisitors arrested him, law or no law, and for the last five years he had breathed the invigorating air of The Leads. Like myself he had fifty sous a day, but he could do what he liked with the money. The monk, who was always penniless, told me a good deal to the disadvantage of the count, whom he represented as very miserly. He informed me that in the cell on the other side of the hall there were two gentlemen of the Seven Townships, who were likewise imprisoned for disobedience, but one of them had become mad and was in chains; in another cell, he said, there were two lawyers.

My suspicions quieted, I reasoned as follows:

I wish to regain my liberty at all hazards. My pike is an admirable instrument, but I can make no use of it, as my cell is sounded all over (except the ceiling) every day. If I would escape, therefore, it is by the ceiling that I must go, but, to do that, I must make a hole through it, and that I cannot do from my side, for it would not be the work of a day. I must have someone to help me; and, not having much choice, I had to pick out the monk. He was thirty-eight, and, though not rich in common sense, I judged that the love of liberty—the first need of a man—would give him sufficient courage to carry out any orders I might give. I must begin by telling him my plan in its entirety, and then I shall have to find a way to give him the bar. I had, then, two difficult problems before me.

My first step was to ask him if he wished to be free and if he were disposed to hazard all in attempting his escape in my company. He replied that his mate and he would do anything to break their chains, but, added he, "it is of no use to break one's head against a stone wall." He filled four pages with the impossibilities which presented themselves to his feeble intellect, for the fellow saw no chance of success in any quarter. I replied that I did not trouble myself with general difficulties and that, in forming my plan, I had thought only of special difficulties, which I would find means to overcome, and I finished by giving him my word of honour to set him free if he would promise to carry out exactly whatever orders I might give.

He gave me his promise to do so. I told him that I had a pike twenty inches long and with this tool he must pierce the ceiling of his cell next the wall which separated us, and he would then be above my head; his next step would be to make a hole in the ceiling of my cell and aid me to escape by it. "Here your task will end and mine will begin, and I will undertake to set both you and Count Asquin at liberty."

He answered that when I had got out of my cell, I should be still in prison and our position would be the same as now, as we should only be in the garrets, which were secured by three strong doors.

"I know that, reverend father," I replied, "but we are not going to escape by the doors. My plan is complete, and I will guarantee its success. All I ask of you is to carry out my directions and make no difficulties. Do you busy yourself to find out some way of getting my bar without the knowledge of the gaoler. In the meanwhile, make him get you about forty pictures of saints, large enough to cover all the walls of your cell. Lawrence will suspect nothing, and they will do to conceal the opening you are to make in the ceiling. To do this will be the work of some days, and each morning Lawrence will not see what you did the day before, as you will have covered it up with one of the pictures. If you ask me why I do not undertake the work myself, I can only say that the gaoler suspects me, and the objection will doubtless seem to you a weighty one."

Although I had told him to think of a plan to get hold of the pike, I thought of nothing else myself and had a happy thought which I hastened to put into execution. I told Lawrence to buy me a folio *Bible* which had been published recently; it was the *Vulgate* with the *Septuagint*. I hoped to be able to put the pike in the back of the binding of this large volume and thus to convey it to the monk, but, when I saw the book, I found the tool to be two inches longer.

My correspondent had written to tell me that his cell was covered with pictures, and I had communicated to him my idea about the *Bible* and the difficulty presented by its want of length. Happy at being able to display his genius, he rallied me on the poverty of my imagination, telling me that I had only to send him the pike wrapped up in my fox-skin cloak.

"Lawrence," said he, "has often talked about your cloak, and Count

Asquin would arouse no suspicion by asking to see it in order to buy one of the same kind. All you have to do is to send it folded up. Lawrence would never dream of unfolding it."

I, on the other hand, was sure that he would, in the first place, because a cloak folded up is more troublesome to carry than when it is unfolded. However, not to rebuff him and at the same time to show him that I was the wiser, I wrote that he had only to send for the cloak. The next day Lawrence asked me for it, and I gave it folded up, but without the bar, and in a quarter of an hour he brought it back to me, saying that the gentleman had admired it very much.

The monk wrote me a doleful letter, in which he confessed he had given me a piece of bad advice, adding that I was wrong to follow it. According to him the pike was lost, as Lawrence had brought in the cloak all unfolded. After this all hope was gone. I undeceived him and begged him in future to be a little more sparing of his advice. It was necessary to bring the matter to a head, and I determined to send him the bar under cover of my *Bible*, taking measures to prevent the gaoler from seeing the ends of the great volume. My scheme was as follows:

I told Lawrence that I wanted to celebrate St. Michael's Day with a macaroni cheese; but, wishing to show my gratitude to the person who had kindly lent me his books, I should like to make him a large dish of it and prepare it with my own hands. Lawrence told me (as had been arranged between the monk and myself) that the gentleman in question wished to read the large book which cost three sequins.

"Very good," said I, "I will send it him with the macaroni; but get me the largest dish you have, as I wish to do the thing on a grand scale."

He promised to do what I asked him. I wrapped up the pike in paper and put it in the back of the *Bible*, taking care that it projected an equal distance at each end. Now, if I placed on the *Bible* a great dish of macaroni full of melted butter, I was quite sure that Lawrence would not examine the ends. All his gaze would be concentrated upon the plate, to avoid spilling the grease on the book. I told Father Balbi of my plan, charging him to take care how he took the dish and, above all, to take dish and *Bible* together and not one by one.

On the day appointed Lawrence came earlier than usual, carrying a saucepan full of boiling macaroni and all the necessary ingredients for seasoning the dish. I melted a quantity of butter and, after putting the macaroni into the dish, poured the butter over it till it was full to the brim. The dish was a huge one and was much larger than the book on which I placed it. I did all this at the door of my cell, Lawrence being outside.

When all was ready, I carefully took up the *Bible* and dish, placing the back of the book next to the bearer, and told Lawrence to stretch out his arms and take it, to be careful not to spill the grease over the book and to carry the whole to its destination immediately. As I gave him this weighty load, I kept my eyes fixed on his and saw to my

joy that he did not take his gaze off the butter, which he was afraid of spilling. He said it would be better to take the dish first and then to come back for the book, but I told him that this would spoil the present and that both must go together. He then complained that I had put in too much butter and said jokingly that, if it were spilt, he would not be responsible for the loss.

As soon as I saw the *Bible* in the lout's arms, I was certain of success, as he could not see the ends of the pike without twisting his head, and I saw no reason why he should divert his gaze from the plate, which he had enough to do to carry evenly. I followed him with my eyes till he disappeared into the ante-chamber of the monk's cell, and the latter blowing his nose three times, gave me the prearranged signal that all was right, which was confirmed by the appearance of Lawrence a few moments afterwards.

Father Balbi lost no time in setting about the work, and in eight days he succeeded in making a large enough opening in the ceiling, which he covered with a picture pasted to the ceiling with bread-crumbs. On the eighth of October he wrote to say that he had passed the whole night in working at the partition wall and had only succeeded in loosening one brick. He told me the difficulty of separating the bricks joined to one another by a strong cement was enormous, but he promised to persevere, "though," he said, "we shall only make our position worse than it is now." I told him that I was certain of success, that he must believe in me and persevere.

Alas! I was certain of nothing, but I had to speak thus or give up all. I was fain to escape from this hell-on-earth, where I was imprisoned by a most detestable tyranny, and I thought only of forwarding this end, with the resolve to succeed or, at all events, not to stop before I came to a difficulty which was insurmountable. I had read in the great book of experience that in important schemes action is the grand requisite and that the rest must be left to Fortune. If I had entrusted Father Balbi with these deep mysteries of moral philosophy he would have pronounced me a madman.

His work was toilsome only on the first night, for, the more he worked, the easier it became, and, when he had finished, he found he had taken out thirty-six bricks.

On the sixteenth of October, as I was engaged in translating an ode of Horace, I heard a trampling noise above my head, and then three light blows were struck. This was the signal agreed upon to assure us that our calculations were correct. He worked till the evening, and the next day he wrote that, if the roof of my cell was only two boards thick, his work would be finished that day. He assured me that he was carefully making the hole round, as I had charged him, and that he would not pierce the ceiling. This was a vital point, as the slightest mark would have led to discovery. "The final touch," he said, "will take only a quarter of an hour." I had fixed on the day after the next to escape from my cell at night-time, to enter it no more, for with a mate I was quite sure that I could make in two or three hours

a hole in the roof of the ducal palace, and once, on the outside of the roof, I would trust to chance for the means of getting to the ground.

I had not yet got so far as this, for my bad luck had more than one obstacle in store for me. On the same day (it was a Monday) at two o'clock in the afternoon, whilst Father Balbi was at work, I heard the door of the hall being opened. My blood ran cold, but I had sufficient presence of mind to knock twice—the signal of alarm—at which it had been agreed that Father Balbi was to make haste back to his cell and set all in order. Less than a minute afterwards Lawrence opened the door and begged my pardon for giving me a very unpleasant companion. This was a man between forty and fifty, short, thin, ugly and badly dressed, wearing a black wig; while I was looking at him, he was unbound by two guards. I had no reason to doubt that he was a knave, since Lawrence told me so before his face without his displaying the slightest emotion. "The court," I said, "can do what seems good to it." After Lawrence had brought him a bed, he told him that the court allowed him ten sous a day, and then locked us up together.

Overwhelmed by this disaster, I glanced at the fellow, whom his every feature proclaimed rogue. I was about to speak to him when he began by thanking me for having got him a bed. Wishing to gain him over, I invited him to take his meals with me. He kissed my hand and asked me if he would still be able to claim the ten sous which the court had allowed him. On my answering in the affirmative, he fell on his knees and, drawing an enormous rosary from his pocket, cast his gaze all round the cell.

"What do you want?"

"You will pardon me, sir, but I am looking for some statue of the Holy Virgin, for I am a Christian; if there were even a small crucifix, it would be something, for I have never been in so much need of the protection of St. Francis of Assisi, whose name I bear, though all unworthy."

I could scarcely help laughing, not at his Christian piety, since faith and conscience are beyond control, but at the curious turn he gave his remonstrance. I concluded he took me for a Jew; and, to disabuse him of this notion, I made haste to give him the *Hours of the Holy Virgin*, whose picture he kissed and then gave me the book back, telling me in a modest voice that his father, a galley officer, had neglected to have him taught to read. "I am," said he, "a devotee of the Holy Rosary," and he told me a host of miracles, to which I listened with the patience of an angel. When he had come to an end, I asked him if he had had his dinner, and he replied that he was dying of hunger. I gave him everything I had, which he devoured rather than ate; drinking all my wine and then becoming maudlin, he began to weep and finally to talk without rhyme or reason. I asked him how he got into trouble, and he told me the following story:

"My aim and my only aim has always been the glory of God and

of the holy Republic of Venice, and that its laws may be exactly obeyed. Always lending an attentive ear to the plots of the wicked, whose end is to deceive, to deprive their prince of his just dues and to conspire secretly, I have over and again unveiled their secret plans and have not failed to report to Messer-Grande all I know. It is true that I am always paid, but the money has never given me so much pleasure as the thought that I have been able to serve the blessed St. Mark. I have always despised those who think there is something dishonourable in the business of a spy. The word sounds ill only to the ill-affected; for a spy is a lover of the state, the scourge of the guilty and the faithful subject of his prince. When I have been put to the test, the feeling of friendship, which might count for something with other men, has never had the slightest influence over me, and still less the sentiment which is called gratitude. I have often, in order to worm out a secret, sworn to be as silent as the grave, and have never failed to reveal it. Indeed, I am able to do so with full confidence, as my director, who is a good Jesuit, has told me that I may lawfully reveal such secrets, not only because my intention was to do so, but because, when the safety of the state is at stake, there is no such thing as a binding oath. I must confess that in my zeal I have betrayed my own father and that in me the promptings of our weak nature have been quite mortified. Three weeks ago I observed that there was a kind of cabal between four or five notables of the town of Isola, where I live. I knew them to be disaffected to the government on account of certain contraband articles which had been confiscated. The first chaplain, a subject of Austria by birth, was in the plot. They gathered together of evenings in an inn, in a room where there was a bed; there they drank and talked and afterwards went their ways. As I was determined to discover the conspiracy, I was brave enough to hide under the bed on a day on which I was sure I would not be seen. Towards the evening my gentlemen came and began to talk; amongst other things, they said that the town of Isola was not within the jurisdiction of St. Mark, but rather in the principality of Trieste, as it could not possibly be considered to form part of the Venetian territory. The chaplain said to the chief of the plot, a man named Pietro Paolo, that, if he and the others would sign a document to that effect, he himself would go to the imperial ambassador and that the Empress would not only take possession of the island, but would reward them for what they had done. They all professed themselves ready to go on, and the chaplain promised to bring the document the next day and afterwards to take it to the ambassadors.

"I determined to frustrate this detestable project, although one of the conspirators was my gossip—a spiritual relationship which gave him a greater claim on me than if he had been my own brother.

"After they were gone, I came out of my hiding-place and did not think it necessary to expose myself to danger by hiding again, as I had found out sufficient for my purpose. I set out the same night in a boat and reached here the next day before noon. I had the names of the

six rebels written down, and I took the paper to the secretary of the Tribunal, telling him all I had heard. He ordered me to appear the day following at the palace, and an agent of the government should go back with me to Isola, that I might point the chaplain out to him, as he had probably not yet gone to the Austrian ambassador's. 'That done,' said the lord secretary, 'you will no longer meddle in the matter.' I executed his orders, and, after having shown the chaplain to the agent, I was at leisure for my own affairs.

"After dinner my gossip called me in to shave him (for I am a barber by profession), and, after I had done so, he gave me a capital glass of *refosco* with some slices of sausages, and we ate together in all good fellowship. My love for him had still possession of my soul, so I took his hand and, shedding some heartfelt tears, advised him to have no more to do with the canon and, above all, not to sign the document he knew of. He protested that he was no particular friend of the chaplain's and swore he did not know what document I was talking about. I burst into a laugh, telling him it was only my joke, and went forth very sorry at having yielded to a sentiment of affection which had made me commit so grievous a mistake. The next day I saw neither the man nor the chaplain. A week after, having paid a visit to the palace, I was promptly imprisoned, and here I am with you, my dear sir. I thank St. Francis for having given me the company of a good Christian, who is here for reasons of which I desire to know nothing, for I am not curious. My name is Soradaci, and my wife is a Legrenzi, daughter of a secretary to the Council of Ten, who, in spite of all prejudice to the contrary, determined to marry me. She will be in despair at not knowing what has become of me, but I hope to be here for only a few days, since the only reason of my imprisonment is that the secretary wishes to be able to examine me more conveniently."

I shuddered to think of the monster who was with me, but, feeling that the situation was a risky one and that I should have to make use of him, I compassionated him, praised his patriotism and predicted that he would be set at liberty in a few days. A few moments after he fell asleep, and I took the opportunity of telling the whole story to Father Balbi, showing him that we should be obliged to put off our work to a more convenient season. Next day I told Lawrence to buy me a wooden crucifix, a statue of Our Lady, a portrait of St. Francis and two bottles of holy water. Soradaci asked for his ten sous, and Lawrence, with an air of contempt, gave him twenty. I asked Lawrence to buy me four times the usual amount of garlic, wine and salt—a diet in which my hateful companion delighted. After the gaoler was gone, I deftly drew out the letter Balbi had written me and in which he drew a vivid picture of alarm. He thought all was lost and over and over again thanked Heaven that Lawrence had put Soradaci in my cell, "for," said he, "if he had come into mine, he would not have found me there, and we should possibly have shared a cell in The Wells as a reward for our endeavours."

Soradaci's tale had satisfied me that he was imprisoned only to be examined, as it seemed plain that the secretary had arrested him on suspicion of bearing false witness. I thereupon resolved to entrust him with two letters which would do me neither good nor harm if they were delivered at their addresses, but which would be beneficial to me if the traitor gave them to the secretary as a proof of his loyalty, as I had not the slightest doubt he would do.

I spent two hours in writing these two letters in pencil. Next day Lawrence brought me the crucifix, the two pictures and the holy water, and, having worked the rascal well up to the point, I said:

"I reckon upon your friendship and your courage. Here are two letters I want you to deliver when you recover your liberty. My happiness depends on your loyalty, but you must hide the letters, as, if they were found upon you, we should both of us be undone. You must swear by the crucifix and these holy pictures not to betray me."

"I am ready, dear master, to swear to anything you like, and I owe you too much to betray you."

This speech was followed by much weeping and lamentation. He called himself "unhappy wretch" at being suspected of treason towards a man for whom he would have given his life. I knew my man, but I played out the comedy. Having given him a shirt and a cap, I stood up bare-headed, and, then having sprinkled the cell with holy water and plentifully bedewed him with the same liquid, I made him swear a dreadful oath, stuffed with senseless imprecations, which for that very reason were the better fitted to strike terror to his soul. After his having sworn the oath to deliver my letters to their addresses, I gave him them, and he himself proposed to sew them up at the back of his waistcoat, between the stuff and the lining, to which proceeding I assented.

I was morally sure he would deliver my letters to the secretary on the first opportunity, so I took the utmost care that my style of writing should not disclose the trick. They could only gain me the esteem of the court and possibly its mercy. One of the letters was addressed to M. de Bragadin and the other to the Abbé Grimani, and I told them not to be anxious about me, as I was in good hopes of soon being set at liberty, that they would find when I came out that my imprisonment had done me more good than harm, as there was no one in Venice who stood in need of reform more than I.

I begged M. de Bragadin to be kind enough to send me a pair of fur boots for the winter, as my cell was high enough for me to stand upright and to walk up and down. I took care that Soradaci should not suspect the innocent nature of these letters, as he might then have been seized with the temptation to do an honest thing for me and have delivered them, which was not what I was aiming at. You will see, dear reader, in the following chapter the power of oaths over the vile soul of my odious companion, and also if I have not verified the saying *In vino veritas*, for in the story he told me the wretch had shown himself in his true colours.

CHAPTER 52

SORADACI had had my letters for two or three days when Lawrence came one afternoon to take him to the secretary. As he was several hours away, I hoped to see his face no more; but to my great astonishment he was brought back in the evening. As soon as Lawrence had gone, he told me that the secretary suspected him of having warned the chaplain, since that individual had never been near the ambassador's and no document of any kind was found upon him. He added that after a long examination he had been confined in a very small cell and was then bound and brought again before the secretary, who wanted him to confess that he told someone at Isola that the priest would never return, but that he had not done so as he had said no such thing. At last the secretary got tired, called the guards and had him brought back to my cell.

I was distressed to hear his account, as I saw that the wretch would probably remain a long time in my company. Having to inform Father Balbi of this fatal misadventure, I wrote to him during the night, and, being obliged to do so more than once, I got accustomed to write correctly enough in the dark.

On the next day, to assure myself that my suspicions were well founded, I told the spy to give me the letter I had written to M. de Bragadin, as I wanted to add something to it. "You can sew it up afterwards," said I.

"It would be dangerous," he replied, "as the gaoler might come in in the meantime and then we should both be ruined."

"No matter. Give me my letters."

Thereupon the hound threw himself at my feet and swore that, on his appearing for a second time before the dreaded secretary, he had been seized with a severe trembling and he had felt in his back, especially in the place where the letters were, so intolerable an oppression, that the secretary had asked him the cause and he had not been able to conceal the truth. Then the secretary rang his bell, and Lawrence came in, unbound him and took off his waistcoat and unsewed the lining. The secretary then read the letters and put them in a drawer of his bureau, telling him that, if he had taken the letters, he would have been discovered and would have lost his life.

I pretended to be overwhelmed, and, covering my face with my hands, I knelt down at the bedside before the picture of the Virgin and asked her to avenge me on the wretch who had broken the most sacred oaths. I afterwards lay down on the bed, my face to the wall, and remained there the whole day without moving, without speaking a word and pretending not to hear the tears, cries and protestations of repentance uttered by the villain. I played my part in the comedy I had sketched out to perfection. In the night I wrote to Father Balbi to come at two o'clock in the afternoon, not a minute sooner or later, to work for four hours and not a minute more. "On this precision," I wrote, "our liberty depends, and, if you observe it, all will be well."

It was the twenty-fifth of October, and the time for me to carry out of my design or give it up forever drew near. The State Inquisitors and their secretary went every year to a village on the mainland and passed there the first three days of November. Lawrence, taking advantage of his masters' absence, did not fail to get drunk every evening and did not appear at The Leads in the morning till a late hour.

Advised of these circumstances, I chose this time to make my escape, as I was certain that my flight would not be noticed till late in the morning. Another reason for my determination to hurry my escape, when I could no longer doubt the villainy of my detestable companion, seems to me to be worthy of record.

The greatest relief of a man in the midst of misfortune is the hope of escaping from it. He sighs for the hour when his sorrows are to end; he thinks he can hasten it by his prayers; he will do anything to know when his torments shall cease. The sufferer, impatient and enfeebled, is mostly inclined to superstition. "God," says he, "knows the time, and God may reveal it to me, it matters not how." Whilst he is in this state, he is ready to trust in divination in any manner his fancy leads him and is more or less disposed to believe in the oracle of which he makes choice.

I was then in this state of mind; but, not knowing how to make use of the *Bible* to inform me of the moment in which I should recover my liberty, I determined to consult the divine *Orlando Furioso*, which I had read a hundred times, which I knew by heart and which was my delight under The Leads. I idolised the genius of Ariosto and considered him a far better fortune-teller than Virgil.

With this idea I wrote a question addressed to the supposed Intelligence, in which I asked in what canto of Ariosto I should find the day of my deliverance. I then made a reversed pyramid composed of the number formed from the words of the question, and, by subtracting the number nine, I obtained finally "nine." This told me that I should find my fate in the ninth canto. I followed the same method to find out the exact stanza and verse and got "seven" for the stanza and "one" for the verse.

I took up the poem, and, my heart beating as if I trusted wholly in the oracle, I opened it, turned down the leaf and read, "*Fra il fin d'ottobre, e il capo di novembre.*"

The precision of the line and its appropriateness to my circumstances appeared so wonderful to me that I will not confess that I placed my faith entirely in it, but the reader will pardon me if I say that I did all in my power to make the prediction a correct one. The most singular circumstance is that "between the end of October and the beginning of November" there is only the instant of midnight and it was just as the clock was striking midnight on the thirty-first of October that I escaped from my cell, as the reader will soon see.

The following is the manner in which I passed the morning, to strike awe into the soul of that vicious brute, confound his feeble intellect and render him harmless to me:

As soon as Lawrence had left us, I told Soradaci to come and take some soup. The scoundrel was in bed, and he had told Lawrence that he was ill. He would not have dared to approach me if I had not called him. However, he rose from his bed and threw himself flat upon the ground at my feet and said, weeping violently, that, if I would not forgive him, he would die before the day was done, as he already felt the curse and the vengeance of the Holy Virgin which I had denounced against him. He felt devouring pains in his bowels, and his mouth was covered with sores. He showed it me, and I saw it was full of ulcers, but I cannot say whether it was thus the night before. I did not much care to examine him to see if he were telling me the truth. My cue was to pretend to believe him and to make him hope for mercy. I began by giving him to eat and drink. The traitor most likely intended to deceive me, but, as I was myself determined to deceive him, it remained to be seen which was the acuter. I had planned an attack against which it was improbable that he could defend himself.

Assuming an inspired air, I said, "Be seated and take this soup, and afterwards I will tell thee of thy good fortune, for know that the Virgin of the Rosary appeared to me at daybreak and bids me pardon thee. Thou shalt not die but live and shalt come out of this place with me." In great wonderment and kneeling on the ground for want of a chair, he ate the soup with me and afterwards seated himself on the bed to hear what I had to say. Thus I spoke to him:

"The grief I experienced at your dreadful treason made me pass a sleepless night, as the letters might condemn me to spend here the remnant of my days. My only consolation, I confess, was the certainty that you would die here also before my eyes within three days. Full of this thought not worthy of a Christian (for God bids us forgive our enemies) my weariness made me sleep, and in my sleep I had a vision. I saw that Holy Virgin, Mother of God, whose likeness you behold—I saw her before me, and, opening her lips, she spoke thus:

"Soradaci is a devotee of my Holy Rosary. I protect him, and I will that you forgive him, and then the curse he has drawn on himself will cease. In return for your generosity I will order one of my angels to take the form of man, to come down from Heaven to break open the roof of your prison and set you free within five or six days. The angel will begin his task this day at two o'clock precisely, and he will work till half an hour before sunset, since he must ascend again into Heaven while the daylight lasts. When you come out of this place, take Soradaci with you and have a care for him if he will renounce his business of spying. Tell him all."

"With these words the Holy Virgin vanished out of my sight and I awoke."

I spoke all the while with a serious face and the air of one inspired, and I saw that the traitor was petrified. I then took my *Book of Hours*, sprinkled the cell with holy water and pretended to pray, kissing from time to time the picture of the Virgin. An hour afterwards the brute,

who so far had not opened his mouth, asked me bluntly at what time the angel would come down from Heaven and if we should hear him breaking into the cell.

"I am certain that he will begin at two o'clock, that we shall hear him at his work and that he will depart at the hour named by the Holy Virgin."

"You may have dreamt it all."

"Nay, not so. Will you swear to me to spy no more?"

Instead of answering, he went off to sleep and did not awake for two hours after, when he asked if he could put off taking the oath. I answered him:

"You can put off taking it till the angel enters to set me free; but, if you do not then renounce by an oath the infamous trade which has brought you here and which will end by bringing you to the gallows, I shall leave you in the cell, for so the Mother of God commands, and, if you do not obey, you will lose her protection."

As I had expected, I saw an expression of satisfaction on his hideous features, for he was quite certain that the angel would not come. He looked at me with a pitying air. I longed to hear the hour strike. The play amused me intensely, for I was persuaded that the approach of the angel would set his miserable wits a-reeling. I was sure, also, that the plan would succeed if Lawrence had not forgotten to give the monk the book, and this was not likely.

An hour before the time appointed, I was fain to dine. I drank only water, and Soradaci drank all the wine and consumed all the garlic I had and thus made himself worse.

As soon as I heard the first stroke of two, I fell on my knees, ordering him in an awful voice to do the like. He obeyed, looking at me in a dazed way. When I heard the first slight noise, I exclaimed, "Lo! the angel cometh!" and fell down on my face and with a hearty fisticuff forced him into the same position. The noise of breaking was plainly heard, and for a quarter of an hour I kept in that troublesome position, and, if the circumstances had been different, I should have laughed to see how motionless the creature was; but I restrained myself, remembering my design of completely turning the fellow's head or at least of obsessing him for a time. As soon as I got up, I knelt and allowed him to imitate me, and I spent three hours in saying the rosary to him. From time to time he dozed off, wearied rather by his position than by the monotony of the prayer, but during the whole time he never interrupted me. Now and again he dared to raise a furtive glance towards the ceiling. With a sort of stupor on his face, he turned his head in the direction of the Virgin, and the whole of his behaviour was for me the highest comedy. When I heard the clock strike the hour for the work to cease, I said to him, "Prostrate thyself, for the angel departeth."

Balbi returned to his cell, and we heard him no more. As I rose to my feet, fixing my gaze on the wretched fellow, I read fright on every feature and was delighted. I addressed a few words to him that I

might see in what state of mind he was. He shed tears in abundance, and what he said was mostly extravagant, his ideas having no sequence or connection. He spoke of his sins, of his acts of devotion, of his zeal in the service of St. Mark and of the work he had done for the Commonwealth, and to this attributed the special favours Mary had shown him. I had to put up with a long story about the miracles of the Rosary which his wife, whose confessor was a young Dominican, had told him. He said that he did not know what use I could make of an ignorant fellow like him.

"I will take you into my service, and you shall have all that you need without being obliged to pursue the hazardous trade of a spy."

"Shall we not be able to remain at Venice?"

"Certainly not. The angel will take us to a land which does not belong to St. Mark. Will you swear to me that you will spy no more? And, if you swear, will you become a perjurer a second time?"

"If I take the oath, I will surely keep it; of that there can be no doubt; but you must confess that, if I had not perjured myself, you would never have received such favour at the hands of the Virgin. My broken faith is the cause of your bliss. You ought, therefore, to love me and be content with my treason."

"Dost love Judas, who betrayed Jesus Christ?"

"No."

"You perceive, then, that one detests the traitor and at the same time adores the Divine Providence which knows how to bring good out of evil. Up to the present time you have done wickedly. You have offended God and the Virgin His Mother, and I will not receive your oath till you have expiated your sins."

"What sin have I done?"

"You have sinned by pride, Soradaci, in thinking that I was under an obligation to you for betraying me and giving my letters to the secretary."

"How shall I expiate this sin?"

"Thus. To-morrow, when Lawrence comes, you must lie on your bed, your face towards the wall and without the slightest motion or a single glance at Lawrence. If he address you, you must answer, without looking at him, that you could not sleep and need rest. Do you promise me entirely to do this thing?"

"I will do whatsoever you tell me."

"Quick, then, take your oath before this holy picture."

"I promise, Holy Mother of God, that, when Lawrence comes, I will not look at him nor stir from my bed."

"And I, Most Holy Virgin, swear by the bowels of your Divine Son that, if I see Soradaci move in the least or look towards Lawrence, I will throw myself straightway upon him and strangle him without mercy, to your honour and glory."

I counted on my threat having at least as much effect upon him as his oath. Nevertheless, as I was anxious to make sure, I asked him if he had anything to say against the oath, and, after thinking for a

moment, he answered that he was quite content with it. Well pleased myself, I gave him something to eat and told him to go to bed, as I needed sleep.

As soon as he was asleep, I began to write and wrote on for two hours. I told Balbi all that had happened and said that, if the work was far enough advanced, he need only come above my cell to put the final stroke to it and break through. I made him note that we should set out on the night of the thirty-first of October and that we should be four in all, counting his companion and mine. It was now the twenty-eighth of the month.

In the morning the monk wrote me that the passage was made, and that he should require only to work at the ceiling of my cell to break through the last board and this would be done in four minutes. Soradaci observed his oath, pretending to sleep, and Lawrence said nothing to him. I kept my eyes upon him the whole time, and I verily believe I should have strangled him if he had made the slightest motion towards Lawrence, for a wink would have been enough to betray me.

The rest of the day was devoted to high discourses and exalted expressions, which I uttered as solemnly as I could, and enjoyed the sight of seeing him become more and more fanatical. To heighten the effect of my mystic exhortation, I dosed him heavily with wine and did not let him go till he had fallen into a drunken sleep.

Though a stranger to all metaphysical speculations and a man who had never exercised his reasoning faculties except in devising some piece of spy-craft, the fellow confused me for a moment by saying that he could not conceive how an angel should have to take so much trouble to break open our cell. But after lifting my eyes to Heaven, or rather to the roof of my dungeon cell, I said:

"The ways of God are inscrutable; and, since the messenger of Heaven works not as an angel (for then a slight single blow would be enough), he works like a man, whose form he has doubtless taken, as we are not worthy to look upon his celestial body. And, furthermore," said I, like a true Jesuit, who knows how to draw advantage from everything, "I foresee that the angel, to punish us for your evil thought, which has offended the Holy Virgin, will not come to-day. Wretch, your thoughts are not those of an honest, pious and religious man, but those of a sinner who thinks he has to do with Messer-Grande and his myrmidons."

I wanted to drive him to despair, and I had succeeded. He began to weep bitterly, and his sobs almost choked him when two o'clock struck and no sign of the angel was heard. Instead of calming him, I endeavoured to augment his misery by my complaints. The next morning he was obedient to my orders, for, when Lawrence asked him how he was, he replied without moving his head. He behaved in the same manner on the following day and until I saw Lawrence for the last time on the morning of the thirty-first of October. I gave him the book for Balbi and told the monk to come at noon to break through the ceiling. I feared nothing, as Lawrence had told me that

the Inquisitors and the secretary had already set out for the country. I had no reason to dread the arrival of a new companion, and all I had to do was to manage my knave.

After Lawrence was gone, I told Soradaci that the angel would come and make an opening in the ceiling about noon.

"He will bring a pair of scissors with him," I said, "and you will have to cut the angel's beard and mine."

"Has the angel a beard?"

"Yes, you shall see it for yourself. Afterwards we will get out of the cell and proceed to break the roof of the palace, whence we shall descend into St. Mark's Place and set out for Germany."

He answered nothing. He had to eat by himself, for my mind was too much occupied to think about dinner—indeed, I had been unable to sleep.

The appointed hour struck—and the angel came. Soradaci was going to fall down on his face, but I told him it was not necessary. In three minutes the passage was completed, the piece of board fell at my feet, and Father Balbi into my arms. "Your work is ended and mine begun," said I to him. We embraced each other, and he gave me the pike and a pair of scissors. I told Soradaci to cut our beards, but I could not help laughing to see the creature—his mouth all agape—staring at the angel, who was more like a devil. However, though quite beside himself, he cut our beards admirably.

Anxious to see how the land lay, I told the monk to stay with Soradaci, as I did not care to leave him alone, and I went out. I found the hole in the wall narrow, but I succeeded in getting through it. I was above the count's cell, and I came in and greeted the worthy old man. The man before me was not fitted to encounter such difficulties as would be involved in an escape by a steep roof covered with plates of lead. He asked me what my plan was and told me he thought I had acted rather inconsiderately. "I only ask to go forward," said I, "till I find death or freedom." "If you intend," he answered, "to pierce the roof and descend from thence, I see no prospect of success, unless you have wings; and I, at all events, have not the courage to accompany you. I will remain here and pray to God on your behalf."

I went out again to look at the roof, getting as close as I could to the sides of the loft. Touching the lower part of the roof, I took up a position between the beams, and, feeling the wood with the end of the bar, I luckily found them to be half-rotten. At every blow of the bar they fell to dust, so, feeling certain of my ability to make a large enough hole in less than an hour, I returned to my cell and for four hours employed myself in cutting up sheets, coverlets and bedding, to make ropes. I took care to make the knots myself and to be assured of their strength, for a single weak knot might cost us our lives. At last I had ready a hundred fathoms of rope.

In great undertakings there are certain critical points which the leader who deserves to succeed trusts to no one but himself. When the rope was ready, I made a parcel of my suit, my cloak, a few shirts, stock-

ings and handkerchiefs, and the three of us went into the count's cell. The first thing the count did was to congratulate Soradaci on having been placed in the same cell as myself and on being so soon about to regain his liberty. His air of speechless confusion made me want to laugh. I took no more trouble about him, for I had thrown off the mask of Tartuffe, which I had found terribly inconvenient all the time I had worn it for the rascal's sake. He knew, I could see, that he had been deceived, but he understood nothing else, as he could not make out how I could have arranged with the supposed angel to come and go at certain fixed times. He listened attentively to the count, who told us we were going to our destruction, and, like the coward that he was, he began to plan how to escape from the dangerous journey. I told the monk to put his bundle together while I was making the hole in the roof by the side of the loft.

At eight o'clock, without needing any help, my opening was made. I had broken up the beams, and the space was twice the size required. I got the plate of lead off in one piece. I could not do it by myself, because it was riveted. The monk came to my aid, and, by dint of driving the bar between the gutter and the lead, I succeeded in loosening it, and then, heaving at it with our shoulders, we beat it up till the opening was wide enough. On putting my head out through the hole, I was distressed to see the brilliant light of the crescent moon then entering on its first quarter. This was a piece of bad luck which had to be borne patiently, and we should have to wait till midnight, when the moon would have gone to light up the Antipodes. On such a fine night as this everybody would be walking in St. Mark's Place, and I dared not show myself on the roof, as the moonlight would have thrown a huge shadow of me on the place and have drawn towards me all eyes, especially those of Messer-Grande and his myrmidons, and our fine scheme would have been brought to nothing by their detestable activity. I immediately decided that we could not escape till after the moon set; in the meantime I prayed for the help of God, but did not ask Him to work any miracles for me. I was at the mercy of Fortune, and I had to take care not to give her any advantages; and, if my scheme ended in failure, I should be consoled by the thought that I had not made a single mistake. The moon would set at eleven and sunrise was at six, so we had seven hours of perfect darkness at our service; and, though we had a hard task, I considered that in seven hours it would be accomplished.

I told Father Balbi that we could pass the three hours in talking to Count Pasquin. I requested him to go first and ask the count to lend me thirty sequins, which would be as necessary to me as my pike had been hitherto. He carried my message and a few minutes after came and asked me to go myself, as the count wished to talk to me alone. The poor old man began by saying with great politeness that I really stood in no need of money to escape, that he had none, that he had a large family, that, if I was killed, the money would be lost, with a thousand other futilities of the same kind to disguise his avarice or the dis-

like he felt to parting with his money. My reply lasted for half an hour and contained some excellent arguments, which never have had and never will have any force, as the finest weapons of oratory are blunted when used against one of the strongest of the passions. It was a matter of *nolenti baculus*; not that I was cruel enough to use force towards an unhappy old man like the count. I ended my speech by saying that, if he would flee with us, I would carry him upon my back as Æneas carried Anchises; but, if he was going to stay in prison to offer up prayers for our success, his prayers would be absurd, as it would be a case of praying God to give success when he himself had refused to contribute the most ordinary aid.

He replied by a flood of tears, which affected me. He then asked if two sequins would be enough, and I answered in the affirmative. He then gave them to me, begging me to return them to him if, after getting on the roof, I saw my wisest course would be to come back. I promised to do so, feeling somewhat astonished that he should deem me capable of a retreat. He little knew me, for I would have preferred death to an imprisonment which would have been lifelong.

I called my companions, and we set all our baggage near the hole. I divided the hundred fathoms of rope into two packets, and we spent two hours in talking over the chances of our undertaking. The first proof which Father Balbi gave me of his fine character was to tell me ten times over that I had broken my word with him, since I assured him that my scheme was complete and certain, while it was really nothing of the kind. He went so far as to tell me that, if he had known as much, he would not have taken me from my cell. The count also, with all the weight of his seventy years, told me that I should do well to give up so hazardous an undertaking, in which success was impossible and death probable. As he was a barrister, he made me a speech as follows, and I had not much difficulty in guessing that he was inspired by the thought of the two sequins which I should have had to give him back if he had succeeded in persuading me to stay where I was:

"The incline of the roof covered with lead plates," said he, "will render it impossible for you to walk; indeed, you will scarcely be able to stand on your feet. It is true the roof has seven or eight windows, but they are all barred with iron, and you could not keep your footing near them since they are far from the sides. Your ropes are useless, as you will find nothing whereon to fasten them; and, even if you did, a man descending from such a height cannot reach the ground by himself. One of you will therefore have to lower the two others one at a time, as one lowers a bucket or a bundle of wood, and he who does so will have to stay behind and go back to his cell. Which of you three has a vocation for this dangerous work of charity? And supposing that one of you is heroic enough to do so, can you tell me on which side you are going to descend? Not by the side towards the palace, for you would be seen; not by the church, as you would find yourselves still shut up, and, as to the court side, you surely would not think of it, for you would fall into the hands of the *arsenalotti*, who are always going their rounds

there. You have only the canal side left, and where is your gondola to take you off? Not having such a thing, you will be obliged to throw yourselves in and escape by swimming towards St. Apollonia, which you will reach in a wretched condition, not knowing where to turn to next. You must remember that the leads are slippery and that, if you were to fall into the canal, considering the height of the fall and the shallowness of the water, you would most certainly be killed if you could swim like a shark. You would be crushed to death, for three or four feet of water are not sufficient to counteract the effect of a fall from such a height. In short, the best fate you can expect is to find yourself on the ground with broken arms and legs."

The effect of this discourse, a very unseasonable one under the circumstances, was to make my blood boil, but I listened with a patience wholly foreign to my nature. The rough reproaches of the monk enraged me and inclined me to answer him in his own way; but I felt that my position was a difficult one and that, unless I was careful, I might ruin all, for I had to do with a coward quite capable of saying that he was not going to risk his life and that, if I wanted to go I might go by myself; and by myself I could not hope to succeed. I constrained myself, therefore, and, as politely as I could, I told them I was sure of success, though I could not as yet communicate the details of my plan. "I shall profit by your wise counsels," said I to Count Pasquin, "and be very prudent, but my trust in God and in my own strength will carry me through all difficulties."

From time to time I stretched out my hand to assure myself that Soradaci was there, for he did not speak a word. I laughed to myself to think what he might be turning in his head, now that he was convinced that I had deceived him. At half-past ten I told him to go and see what was the position of the moon. He obeyed and returned, saying that in an hour and a half it would have disappeared and that there was a thick fog which would make the leads very dangerous.

"All I ask," I said, "is that the fog be not made of oil. Put your cloak in a packet with some of the rope, which must be divided equally between us."

At this I was astonished to find him at my knees, kissing my hands and entreating me not to kill him. "I should be sure," said he, "to fall over into the canal, and I should not be of any use to you. Ah! leave me here, and all the night I will pray to St. Francis for you. You can kill me or save me alive; but of this I am determined, never to follow you."

The fool never thought how he had responded to my prayers.

"You are right," I said, "you may stop here, on the condition that you will pray to St. Francis and that you go forthwith and fetch my books, which I wish to leave to the count."

He did so without answering me, doubtless with much joy. My books were worth at least a hundred crowns. The count told me he would give them to me back on my return.

"You may be sure," I said, "that you will never see me here again."

The books will cover your expenditure of two sequins. As to this rascal, I am delighted, that he cannot muster sufficient courage to come with me. He would be in the way, and the fellow is not worthy of sharing with Father Balbi and myself the honours of so brave a flight."

"That's true," said the count, "provided he does not congratulate himself to-morrow."

I asked the count to give me pens, ink and paper, which he possessed in spite of the regulations to the contrary, for such prohibitions were nothing to Lawrence, who would have sold St. Mark himself for a crown. I then wrote the following letter, which I gave to Soradaci, not being able to read it over, as I had written it in the dark. I began by a fine heading, which I wrote in Latin:

"I shall not die, but live and declare the works of the Lord.

"Our Lords of State are bound to do all in their power to keep a prisoner under The Leads, and, on the other hand, the prisoner, who is fortunately not on parole, is bound to make his escape. Their right to act thus is founded on justice, while the prisoner follows the voice of nature; and, since they have not asked him whether he will be put in prison, so he ought not to ask them leave to escape.

"Jacques Casanova, writing in the bitterness of his heart, knows that he may have the ill luck to be recaptured before he succeeds in leaving the Venetian territory and escaping to a friendly state; but, if so, he appeals to the humanity of the judges not to add to the misery of the condition from which, yielding to the voice of nature, he is endeavouring to escape. He begs them, if he be taken, to return him whatever may be in his cell, but, if he succeeds, he gives the whole to Francis Soradaci, who is still a captive for want of courage to escape, not, like me, preferring liberty to life. Casanova entreats Their Excellencies not to refuse the poor wretch this gift. Dated an hour before midnight, in the cell of Count Asquin, on October 31st, 1756."

I warned Soradaci not to give this letter to Lawrence, but to the secretary in person, who, no doubt, would interrogate him, if he did not go himself to the cell, which was the more likely course. The count said my letter was perfect, but that he would give me back all my books if I returned. The fool said he wished to see me again to prove that he would return everything gladly.

But our time was come. The moon had set. I hung the half of the ropes on Father Balbi's neck on one side and his clothes on the other. I did the same to myself, and, with out hats on and our coats off, we went to the opening.

E quindi uscimmo a rimirar le stelle.—Dante.

CHAPTER 53

I got out the first, and Father Balbi followed me. Soradaci, who had come as far as the opening, had orders to put the plate of lead back in

its place and then go and pray to St. Francis for us. Keeping on my hands and knees and grasping my pike firmly, I pushed it obliquely between the joining of the plates of lead, and then, holding the side of the plate which I had lifted, I succeeded in drawing myself up to the summit of the roof. The monk had taken hold of my waistband to follow me, and thus I was like a beast of burden who has to carry and draw along at the same time, and this on a steep and slippery roof.

When we were halfway up, the monk asked me to stop, as one of his packets had slipped off and he hoped it had not gone further than the gutter. My first thought was to give him a kick and send him after his packet, but, praise be to God! I had sufficient self-control not to yield to it, and indeed the punishment would have been too heavy for both of us, as I should have had no chance of escaping by myself. I asked him if it were the bundle of rope, and, on his replying that it was a small packet of his own containing a manuscript he had found in one of the garrets under The Leads, I told him he must bear it patiently, as a single step might be our destruction. The poor monk gave a sigh, and, he still clinging to my waist, we continued climbing.

After having surmounted with the greatest difficulty fifteen or sixteen plates, we got to the top, on which I sat astride, Father Balbi imitating my example. Our backs were towards the little island of St. George the Greater, and about two hundred paces in front of us were the numerous cupolas of St. Mark's Church, which forms part of the ducal palace, for St. Mark's is really the Doge's private chapel and no monarch in the world can boast of having a finer. My first step was to take off my bundle, and I told my companion to do the same. He put the rope as best he could upon his thighs, but, wishing to take off his hat, which was in his way, he took hold of it awkwardly and it was soon dancing from plate to plate to join the packet of linen in the gutter. My poor companion was in despair.

"A bad omen!" he exclaimed. "Our task is but begun and here am I deprived of shirt, hat and a precious manuscript, containing a curious account of the festivals at the palace."

I felt calmer, now that I was no longer crawling on hands and knees, and told him quietly that the two accidents which had happened to him had nothing extraordinary in them and that not even a superstitious person would call them omens, that I did not consider them in that light and that they were far from damping my spirits.

"They ought rather," said I, "to warn you to be prudent and to remind you that God is certainly watching over us, for, if your hat had fallen to the left instead of to the right, we should have been undone, as in that case it would have fallen into the palace court, where it would have caught the attention of the guards and have let them know that there was someone on the roof; and in a few minutes we should have been retaken."

After looking about me for some time, I told the monk to stay still till I came back, and I set out, my pike in my hand, sitting astride the roof and moving along without any difficulty. For nearly an hour I

went to this side and that, keeping a sharp lookout, but in vain; for I could see nothing to which the rope could be fastened, and I was in the greatest perplexity as to what was to be done. It was of no use thinking of getting down on the canal side or by the court of the palace, and the church offered only precipices which led to nothing. To get to the other side of the church towards the Canonica, I should have had to climb roofs so steep that I saw no prospect of success. The situation called for hardihood, but not the smallest piece of rashness.

It was necessary, however, either to escape or to re-enter the prison, perhaps never again to leave it, or to throw myself into the canal. In such a dilemma it was necessary to leave a good deal to chance and make a start of some kind. My eye caught a window on the canal side and two-thirds of the distance from the gutter to the summit of the roof. It was a good distance from the spot I had set out from, so I concluded that the garret lighted by it did not form part of the prison I had just broken. It could only light a loft, inhabited or uninhabited, above some rooms in the palace, the doors of which would probably be opened by daybreak. I was morally sure that, if the palace servants saw us, they would help us to escape and not deliver us over to the Inquisitors, even if they recognised us as criminals of the deepest dye—so heartily was the State Inquisition hated by everyone.

It was thus necessary for me to get in front of the window, and, letting myself slide softly down in a straight line, I soon found myself astride on top of the dormer roof. Then, grasping the sides, I stretched my head over and succeeded in seeing and touching a small grating, behind which was a window of square panes of glass joined with thin strips of lead. I did not trouble myself about the window, but the grating, small as it was, appeared an insurmountable difficulty, failing a file, and I had only my pike.

I was thoroughly perplexed and was beginning to lose courage when an incident of the simplest and most natural kind came to my aid and fortified my resolution.

Philosophic reader, if you will place yourself for a moment in my position, if you will share the sufferings which for fifteen months had been my lot, if you think of my danger on the top of a roof, where the slightest step in a wrong direction would have cost me my life, if you consider the few hours at my disposal to overcome difficulties which might spring up at any moment, the candid confession I am about to make will not lower me in your esteem; at any rate, if you do not forget that a man in an anxious and dangerous position is in reality only half himself.

It was the clock of St. Mark's striking midnight which, by a violent shock, drew me out of the state of perplexity I had fallen into. The clock reminded me that the day just beginning was All Saints' Day, the day of my patron saint (at least if I had one), and the prophecy of my confessor came into my mind. But I confess that what chiefly strengthened me, both bodily and mentally, was the profane oracle of my beloved Ariosto, *Fra il fin d'ottobre, e il capo di novembre*.

The chime seemed to me a speaking talisman, commanding me to be up and doing and promising me the victory. Lying on my belly, I stretched my head down towards the grating, and, pushing my pike into the sash which held it, I resolved to take it out in one piece. In a quarter of an hour I succeeded and held the whole grate in my hands, and, putting it on one side, I easily broke the glass window, though wounding my left hand.

With the aid of my pike, using it as I had done before, I regained the ridge of the roof and went back to the spot where I had left Balbi. I found him enraged and despairing, and he abused me heartily for having left him for so long. He assured me that he was only waiting for it to get light to return to the prison.

"What did you think had become of me?"

"I thought you must have fallen off some precipice."

"And you can find no better way than abuse to express the joy you ought to feel at seeing me again?"

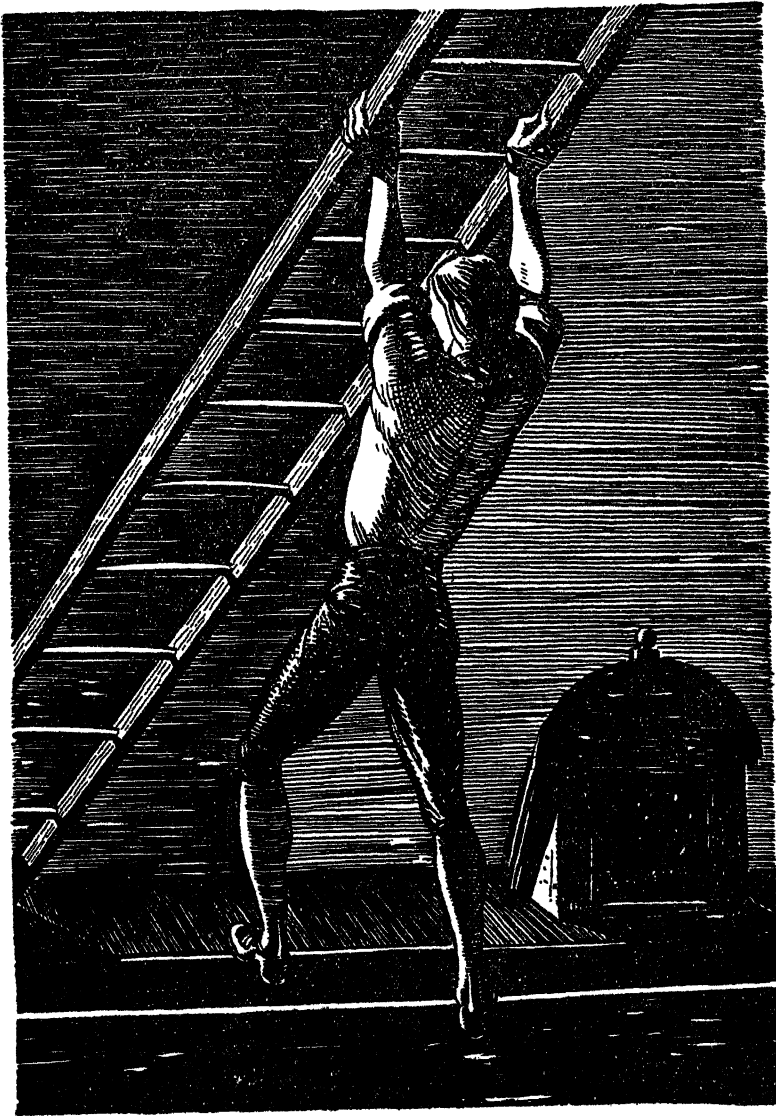
"What have you been doing all this time?"

"Follow me and you shall see."

I took up my packets again and made my way towards the window. As soon as we were opposite to it, I told Balbi what I had done and asked him if he could think of any way of getting into the loft. For one it was easy enough, for the other could lower him by the rope; but I could not discover how the second of us was to get down afterwards, as there was nothing to which the rope could be fastened. If I let myself fall I might break my arms and legs, for I did not know the distance between the window and the floor of the room. To this chain of reasoning, uttered in the friendliest tone, the brute replied thus, "You let me down, and, when I have got to the bottom, you will have plenty of time to think how you are going to follow me."

I confess that my first indignant impulse was to drive my pike into his throat. My good genius stayed my arm, and I uttered not a word in reproach of his base selfishness. On the contrary, I straightway untied my bundle of rope and bound him strongly under the elbows and, making him lie flat down, lowered him feet foremost on to the roof of the dormer window. When he got there, I told him to lower himself into the window as far as his hips, supporting himself by holding his elbows against the sides of the window. As soon as he had done so, I slid down the roof as before, and, lying down on the dormer roof with a firm grasp of the rope, I told the monk not to be afraid, but to let himself go. When he reached the floor of the loft, he untied himself, and, on drawing the rope back, I found the fall was one of fifty feet—too dangerous a jump to be risked. The monk who for two hours had been a prey to terror, seated in a position which I confess was not a very reassuring one, was now quite cool and called out to me to throw him the ropes for him to take care of—a piece of advice you may be sure I took care not to follow.

Not knowing what to do next and waiting for some fortunate idea, I made my way back to the ridge of the roof and from there spied out



Having no one to give me a helping hand, I resolved to go myself to the parapet to lift the ladder and attain the end I had in view. I did so, but at such a hazard as almost to cost me my life.

a corner near a cupola which I had not visited. I went towards it and found a flat roof with a large window closed with two shutters. At hand was a tubful of plaster, a trowel and a ladder which I thought long enough for my purpose. This was enough, and, tying my rope to the first round, I dragged this troublesome burden after me to the window. My next task was to get the end of the ladder (which was twelve fathoms long) into the opening, and the difficulties I encountered made me sorry that I had deprived myself of the aid of the monk.

I had set the ladder in such a way that one end touched the window and the other went below the gutter. I next slid down to the roof of the window and, drawing the ladder towards me, fastened the end of my rope to the eighth round and then let it go again till it was parallel with the window. I then strove to get it in, but I could not insert it farther than the fifth round, for, the end of the ladder being stopped by the inside roof of the window, no force on earth could have pushed it any further without breaking either the ladder or the ceiling. There was nothing to be done but to lift it by the other end; it would then slip down by its own weight. I might, it is true, have placed the ladder across the window and have fastened the rope to it, in which manner I might have let myself down into the loft without any risk; but the ladder would have been left outside to show Lawrence and the guards where to look for us and possibly to find us in the morning.

I did not care to risk by a piece of imprudence the fruit of so much toil and danger; to destroy all traces of our whereabouts, the ladder must be drawn in. Having no one to give me a helping hand, I resolved to go myself to the parapet to lift the ladder and attain the end I had in view. I did so, but at such a hazard as almost cost me my life. I could let go the ladder while I slackened the rope without any fear of its falling over, as it had caught to the parapet by the third rung. Then, my pike in my hand, I slid down beside the ladder to the parapet, which held up the tips of my toes as I was lying on my belly. In this position I pushed the ladder forward and was able to get it into the window to the length of a foot, and that diminished by a good deal its weight. I now had to push it in only another two feet, as I was sure that I could then get it in altogether by means of the rope from the roof of the window. To impel the ladder to the extent required, I got on my knees, but the effort I had to use made me slip, and in an instant I was over the parapet as far as my chest, sustained only by my elbows.

I shudder still when I think of this awful moment, which cannot be conceived in all its horror. My natural instinct made me almost unconsciously strain every nerve to regain the parapet, and—I nearly said “miraculously”—I succeeded. Taking care not to let myself slip back an inch, I struggled upwards with my hands and arms, while my belly was resting on the edge of the parapet. Fortunately the ladder was safe, for, with that unlucky effort which had nearly cost me so dearly, I had pushed it in more than three feet and there it remained.

Finding myself resting on my groin on the parapet, I saw that I had only to lift up my right leg and put up first one knee and then the

other to be absolutely out of danger; but I had not yet got to the end of my trouble. The effort I made gave me so severe a spasm that I became cramped and unable to use my limbs. However, I did not lose my head but kept quiet till the pain had gone off, knowing by experience that keeping still is the best cure for a false cramp. It was a dreadful moment! In two minutes I made another effort and had the good fortune to get my knees on to the parapet, and, as soon as I had taken breath, I cautiously hoisted the ladder and pushed it halfway through the window. I then took my pike and, crawling up as I had done before, reached the window, where my knowledge of the laws of equilibrium and leverage aided me to insert the ladder to its full length, my companion receiving the end of it. I then threw into the loft the bundles and the fragments I had broken off the window and stepped down to the monk, who welcomed me heartily and drew in the ladder. Arm in arm, we proceeded to inspect the gloomy retreat in which we found ourselves and judged it to be about thirty paces long by twenty wide.

At one end were folding doors barred with iron. This looked bad, but, putting my hand to the latch in the middle, it yielded to the pressure, and the door opened. The first thing we did was to make the tour of the room, and, in crossing it, we stumbled against a large table surrounded by stools and armchairs. Returning to the part where we had seen windows, we opened the shutters of one of them, and the light of the stars only showed us the cupolas and the depths beneath them. I did not think for a moment of lowering myself down, as I wished to know where I was going, and I did not recognise our surroundings. I shut the window, and we returned to the place where we had left our packages. Quite exhausted, I let myself fall on the floor, and, placing a bundle of rope under my head, a sweet sleep came to my relief. I abandoned myself to it without resistance, and, indeed, I believe, if death were to have been the result, I should have slept all the same, and I still remember how I enjoyed that sleep.

It lasted for three and a half hours, and I was awakened by the monk's calling out and shaking me. He told me that it had just struck five. He said it was inconceivable to him how I could sleep in the situation we were in. But that which was inconceivable to him was not so to me. I had not fallen asleep on purpose but had only yielded to the demands of exhausted nature, and, if I may say so, the extremity of my need. In my exhaustion there was nothing to wonder at, since I had neither eaten nor slept for two days, and the efforts I had made—efforts almost beyond the limits of mortal endurance—might well have exhausted any man. In my sleep my activity had come back to me, and I was delighted to see the darkness disappearing, so that we should be able to proceed with more certainty and quickness.

Casting a rapid glance around, I said to myself, "This is not a prison; there ought, therefore, to be some easy exit from it." We addressed ourselves to the end opposite to the folding doors, and in a narrow recess I thought I made out a doorway. I felt it over and touched a lock, into which I thrust my pike and opened it with three

or four heaves. We then found ourselves in a small room and I discovered a key on a table, which I tried on a door opposite to us, which, however, proved to be unlocked. I told the monk to go for our bundles, and, replacing the key, we passed out and came into a gallery containing presses full of papers. They were the state archives. I came across a short flight of stone stairs, which I descended, then another, which I descended also and found a glass door at the end, on opening which I entered a hall well known to me—we were in the ducal chancery! I opened a window and could have got down easily, but the result would have been that we should have been trapped in the maze of little courts around St. Mark's Church. I saw on a desk an iron instrument, of which I took possession; it had a rounded point and a wooden handle, being used by the clerks of the chancery to pierce parchments for the purpose of affixing the leaden seals. On opening the desk, I saw the copy of a letter advising the *provveditore* of Corfu of a grant of three thousand sequins for the restoration of the old fortress. I searched for the sequins, but they were not there. God knows how gladly I would have taken them, and how I would have laughed the monk to scorn if he had accused me of theft! I should have received the money as a gift from Heaven and regarded myself as its master by conquest.

Going to the door of the chancery, I put my bar into the keyhole, but, finding immediately that I could not break it open, I resolved on making a hole in the door. I took care to choose the side where the wood had fewest knots, and, working with all speed, I struck as hard and as cleaving strokes as I was able. The monk, who helped me as well as he could with the punch I had taken from the desk, trembled at the echoing clamour of my pike, which must have been audible at some distance. I felt the danger myself, but it had to be risked.

In half an hour the hole was large enough—a fortunate circumstance, for I should have had much trouble in making it any larger without the aid of a saw. I was afraid when I looked at the edges of the hole, for they bristled with jagged pieces of wood which seemed made for tearing clothes and flesh together. The hole was at a height of five feet from the ground. We placed beneath it two stools, one beside the other, and, when we had stepped upon them, the monk with arms crossed and head foremost began to make his way through the hole, and, taking him by the thighs and afterwards by the legs, I succeeded in pushing him through, and, though it was dark, I felt quite secure, as I knew the surroundings. As soon as my companion had reached the other side, I threw him my belongings, with the exception of the ropes, which I left behind, and, placing a third stool on the two others, I climbed up and got through as far as my middle, though with much difficulty, owing to the extreme narrowness of the hole. Then, having nothing to grasp with my hands nor anyone to push me as I had pushed the monk, I asked him to take me and draw me gently and by slow degrees towards him. He did so, and I endured silently the fearful torture I had to undergo, as my thighs and legs were torn by the splinters of wood.

As soon as I got through, I made haste to pick up my bundle of linen, and, going down two flights of stairs, I opened without difficulty the door leading into the passage whence opens the chief door to the grand staircase and beside it the door of the closet of the *savio alla scrittura*. The chief door was locked, and I saw at once that, failing a catapult or a mine of gunpowder, I could not possibly get through. The bar I still held seemed to say, "*Hic fines posuit*. My use is ended and you can lay me down." It was dear to me as the instrument of my freedom and was worthy of being hung as an *ex voto* on the altar of liberty.

I sat down with the utmost tranquillity and told the monk to do the same.

"My work is done," I said. "The rest must be left to God and Fortune.

*"Abbia chi regge il ciel cura del resto,
O la fortuna se non tocca a lui.*

"I do not know whether those who sweep out the palace will come here to-day, which is All Saints' Day, or to-morrow, All Souls' Day. If anyone comes, I shall run out as soon as the door opens, and do you follow after me; but, if nobody comes, I do not budge a step, and, if I die of hunger, so much the worse for me."

At this speech of mine he became beside himself. He called me mad-man, seducer, deceiver, liar. I let him talk and took no notice. It struck six; only an hour had passed since I had my awakening in the loft.

My first task was to change my clothes. Father Balbi looked like a peasant, but he was in better condition than I; his clothes were not torn to shreds or covered with blood, his red flannel waistcoat and purple breeches were intact, while my figure could only inspire pity or terror, so bloodstained and tattered was I. I took off my stockings, and the blood gushed out of two wounds I had given myself on the parapet, while the splinters in the hole in the door had torn my waistcoat, shirt, breeches, legs and thighs. I was dreadfully wounded all over my body. I made bandages of handkerchiefs and dressed my wounds as best I could and then put on my fine suit, which on a winter's day would look odd enough. Having tied up my hair, I put on white stockings, a laced shirt, failing any other, and two others over it, and then, stowing away some stockings and handkerchiefs in my pockets, I threw everything else into a corner of the room. I flung my fine cloak over the monk, and the fellow looked as if he had stolen it. I must have looked like a man who had been to a dance and had spent the rest of the night in a disorderly house, though the only foil to my unseasonable elegance of attire was the bandages round my knees.

In this guise, with my exquisite hat trimmed with Spanish lace and adorned with a white feather on my head, I opened a window. I was immediately remarked by some loungers in the palace court, who, not understanding what anyone of my appearance was doing there at such an early hour, went to tell the doorkeeper of the circumstance. He,

thinking he must have locked somebody in the night before, went for his keys and came towards us. I was sorry to have let myself be seen at the window, not knowing that therein chance was working for our escape, and was sitting down listening to the idle talk of the monk when I heard the jingling of keys. Much perturbed, I got up and put my eye to a chink in the door and saw a man with a great bunch of keys in his hand mounting leisurely up the stairs. I told the monk not to open his mouth, to keep well behind me and to follow my steps. I took my pike and, concealing it in my right sleeve, got into a corner by the door, whence I could get out as soon as it was opened and run down the stairs. I prayed that the man might make no resistance, as, if he did, I should be obliged to fell him to the earth, and I determined to do so.

The door opened, and the poor man, as soon as he saw me, seemed turned to a stone. Without an instant's delay and in dead silence, I made haste to descend the stairs, the monk following me. Avoiding the appearance of a fugitive, but walking fast, I went by the Giants' Stairs, taking no notice of Father Balbi, who kept calling out, "To the church! to the church!"

The church door was only about twenty paces from the stairs, but the churches were no longer sanctuaries in Venice, and no one ever took refuge in them. The monk knew this, but fright had deprived him of his faculties. He told me afterwards that the motive which impelled him to go to the church was the voice of religion bidding him seek the horns of the altar.

"Why didn't you go by yourself?" said I.

"I did not like to abandon you." But he should rather have said, "I did not like to lose the comfort of your company."

The safety I sought was beyond the borders of the Republic, and thitherward I began to bend my steps. Already there in spirit, I must needs be there in body also. I went straight towards the chief door of the palace, and, looking at no one that might be tempted to look at me, I got to the canal and entered the first gondola that I came across, shouting to the boatman on the poop, "I want to go to Fusina; be quick and call another gondolier."

This was soon done, and, while the gondola was being got off, I sat down on the seat in the middle and Balbi at the side. The odd appearance of the monk, without a hat and with a fine cloak on his shoulders, with my unseasonable attire, was enough to make people take us for an astrologer and his man.

As soon as we had passed the custom-house, the gondoliers began to row with a will along the Giudecca Canal, by which we must pass to go to Fusina or to Mestre, which latter place was really our destination. When we had traversed half the length of the canal, I put my head out and said to the waterman on the poop, "When do you think we shall get to Mestre?"

"But you told me to go to Fusina."

"You must be mad; I said Mestre."

The other boatman said that I was mistaken, and the fool of a monk, in his capacity of zealous Christian and friend of truth, took care to tell me I was in the wrong. I wanted to give him a hearty kick as a punishment for his stupidity, but, reflecting that common sense comes not by wishing for it, I burst into a peal of laughter and agreed that I might have made a mistake but that my real intention was to go to Mestre. To that they answered nothing, but a minute after the master boatman said he was ready to take me to England if I liked.

"Bravely spoken," said I, "and now for Mestre, ho!"

"We shall be there in three-quarters of an hour, as the wind and tide are in our favour."

Well pleased, I looked at the canal behind us and thought it had never seemed so fair, especially as there was not a single boat coming our way. It was a glorious morning, the air was clear and glowing with the first rays of the sun, and my two young watermen rowed easily and well; and, as I thought over the night of sorrow, the dangers I had escaped, the abode where I had been fast bound the day before, all the chances which had been in my favour, and the liberty of which I now began to taste the sweets, I was so moved in my heart and grateful to my God that, well-nigh choked with my emotion, I burst into tears.

My nice companion, who had hitherto spoken only to back up the gondoliers, thought himself bound to offer me his consolations. He did not understand why I was weeping, and the tone he took made me pass from sweet affliction to a strange mirthfulness which made him go astray once more, as he thought I had gone mad. The poor monk, as I have said, was a fool, and whatever was bad about him was the result of his folly. I had been under the sad necessity of turning him to account, but, though without intending to do so, he had almost been my ruin. It was no use trying to make him believe that I had told the gondoliers to go to Fusina whilst I intended to go to Mestre; he said I could not have thought of that till I got on to the Grand Canal.

In due course we reached Mestre. There were no horses to ride post, but I found men with coaches who did as well, and I agreed with one of them to take me to Treviso in an hour and a quarter. The horses were put in in three minutes, and, with the idea that Father Balbi was behind me, I turned round to say "Let us get in," but he was not there. I told an ostler to go and look for him, with the intention of reprimanding him sharply, even if he had gone for a necessary occasion, for we had no time to waste, not even thus. The man came back saying he could not find him, to my great rage and indignation. I was tempted to abandon him, but a feeling of humanity restrained me. I made inquiries all round; everybody had seen him, but not a soul knew where he was.

I walked along the high street, and, some instinct prompting me to put my head in at the window of a café, I saw the wretched man standing at the bar, drinking chocolate and making love to the girl. Catching sight of me, he pointed to the girl and said, "She's charming," and then invited me to take a cup of chocolate, saying that I must pay, as he

hadn't a penny. I kept back my wrath and answered, "I don't want any, and do you make haste!" and caught hold of his arm in such sort that he turned white with pain. I paid the money and we went out. I trembled with anger. We got into our coach, but we had scarcely gone ten paces before I recognised an inhabitant of Mestre named Balbi Tommasi, a good sort of man, but reported to be one of the familiars of the Holy Office. He knew me, too, and, coming up, called out:

"I am delighted to see you here. I suppose you have just escaped. How did you do it?"

"I have not escaped, but have been set at liberty."

"No, no, that's not possible, as I was at M. Grimani's yesterday evening, and I should have heard of it."

It will be easier for the reader to imagine my state of mind than for me to describe it. I was discovered by a man whom I believed to be a hired agent of the government, who had only to give a glance to one of the *sbirri* with whom Mestre swarmed to have me arrested. I told him to speak softly, and, getting down, I asked him to come to one side. I took him behind a house, and, seeing that there was nobody in sight, a ditch in front, beyond which the open country extended, I grasped my pike and took him by the neck. At this he gave a struggle, slipped out of my hands, leapt over the ditch and, without turning round, set off to run at full speed. As soon as he was some way off, he slackened his course, turned round and kissed his hand to me, in token of wishing me a prosperous journey. And, as soon as he was out of my sight, I gave thanks to God that this man by his quickness had preserved me from the commission of a crime, for I would have killed him; and he, as it turned out, bore me no ill will.

I was in a terrible position. In open war with all the powers of the Republic, everything had to give way to my safety, which made me neglect no means of attaining my ends.

With the gloom of a man who has passed through a great peril, I gave a glance of contempt towards the monk, who now saw to what danger he had exposed us, and I then got up again into the carriage. We reached Treviso without further adventure, and I told the posting-master to get me a carriage and two horses ready by ten o'clock, though I had no intention of continuing my journey along the highway, both because I lacked means and because I feared pursuit. The inn-keeper asked me if I would take any breakfast, of which I stood in great need, for I was dying with hunger, but I did not dare to accept his offer, as a quarter of an hour's delay might prove fatal. I was afraid of being retaken and of being ashamed of it for the rest of my life, for a man of sense ought to be able to snap his fingers at four hundred thousand men in the open country, and, if he cannot escape capture, he must be a fool.

I went out by St. Thomas's Gate as if I was going for a short walk, and, after walking for a mile on the highway, I struck into the fields, resolving not to leave them as long as I should be within the borders of the Republic. The shortest way was by Bassano, but I took the

longer path, thinking I might possibly be awaited on the more direct road, while they would never think of my leaving the Venetian territory by way of Feltre, which is the longest way of getting into the state subject to the Bishop of Trent.

After walking for three hours, I let myself drop to the ground, for I could not move a step further. I must either take some food or die there, so I told the monk to leave the cloak with me and go to a farm I saw, there to buy something to eat. I gave him the money, and he set off, telling me he thought I had more courage. The miserable man did not know what courage was, but he was more robust than I, and he had, doubtless, taken in nourishment before leaving the prison. Besides, he had had some chocolate, he was thin and wiry, and a monk, and mental anxieties were unknown to him.

Although the house was not an inn, the good farmer's wife sent me a sufficient meal, which cost me only thirty Venetian sous. After satisfying my appetite, feeling that sleep was creeping on me, I set out again on the tramp, well braced up. In four hours' time I stopped at a hamlet and found that I was twenty-four miles from Treviso. I was done up, my ankles were swollen, and my shoes were in holes. There was only another hour of daylight before us. Stretching myself out beneath a grove of trees, I made Father Balbi sit by me and discoursed to him in the manner following:

"We must make for Borgo di Valsugana; it is the first town beyond the borders of the Republic. We shall be as safe there as if we were in London, and we can take our ease for awhile; but to get there we must go carefully to work, and the first thing we must do is to separate. You must go by Mantello Woods, and I by the mountains; you by the easiest and shortest way, and I by the longest and most difficult; you with money and I without a penny. I will make you a present of my cloak, which you must exchange for a great coat and a hat, and everybody will take you for a countryman, as you are luckily rather like one in the face. Take these seventeen livres, which is all that remains to me of the two sequins Count Asquin gave me. You will reach Borgo by the day after to-morrow, and I shall be twenty-four hours later. Wait for me in the first inn on the left-hand side of the street and be sure I shall come in due season. I require a good night's rest in a good bed; and Providence will get me one somewhere, but I must sleep without fear of being disturbed, and in your company that would be out of the question. I am certain that we are being sought for on all sides and that our descriptions have been so correctly given that, if we went into any inn together, we should be certain to be arrested. You see the state I am in and my urgent necessity for a ten hours' rest. Farewell, then, do you go that way and I will take this, and I will find somewhere near here a rest for the sole of my foot."

"I have been expecting you to say as much," said Father Balbi, "and for answer I will remind you of the promise you gave me when I let myself be persuaded to break into your cell. You promised me we should always keep company, and so don't flatter yourself that I shall

leave you; your fate and mine are linked together. We shall be able to get a good refuge for our money, we won't go to the inns, and no one will arrest us."

"You are determined, are you, not to follow the good advice I have given you?"

"I am."

"We shall see about that."

I rose to my feet, though with some difficulty, and, taking the measure of his height, I marked it out upon the ground; then, drawing my pike from my pocket, I proceeded with the utmost coolness to excavate the earth, taking no notice of the questions the monk asked me. After working for a quarter of an hour, I set myself to gaze sadly upon him and told him I felt obliged as a Christian to warn him to commend his soul to God, "since I am about to bury you here, alive or dead; and, if you prove the stronger, you will bury me. You can escape if you wish to, as I shall not pursue you."

He made no reply, and I betook myself to my work again, but I confess that I began to be afraid of being pushed to extremities by this brute, of whom I was determined to rid myself.

At last, whether convinced by my arguments or afraid of my pike, he came towards me. Not guessing what he was about, I presented the point of the pike towards him, but I had nothing to fear.

"I will do what you want," said he.

I straightway gave him all the money I had and, promising to rejoin him at Borgo, bade him farewell. Although I had not a penny in my pocket and had two rivers to cross over, I congratulated myself on having got rid of a man of his character, for by myself I felt confident of being able to cross the bounds of the Republic.

CHAPTER 54

As soon as I saw Father Balbi far enough off, I got up and, seeing at a little distance a shepherd keeping his flock on a hillside, made my way towards him to obtain such information as I needed. "What is the name of this village, my friend?" said I.

"Val de Piadena, signor," he answered, to my surprise, for I found I was much farther on my way than I had thought. I next asked him the owners of five or six houses which I saw scattered around, and the persons he mentioned chanced to be all known to me but were not the kind of men I should have cared to trouble with my presence. On my asking him the name of a palace before me, he said it belonged to the Grimanis, the chief of whom was a State Inquisitor and then resident at the palace, so I had to take care not to let him see me. Finally, on my inquiring the owner of a red house in the distance, he told me, much to my surprise, that it belonged to the chief of the *sbirri*. Bidding farewell to the kindly shepherd, I began to go down the hill mechanically, and I am still puzzled to know what instinct

directed my steps towards that house, which common sense and fear also should have made me shun. I steered my course for it in a straight line, and I can say with truth that I did so quite unwittingly. If it be true that we have all of us an invisible intelligence, a beneficent genius who guides our steps aright, as was the case with Socrates, to that alone I should attribute the irresistible attraction which drew me towards the house where I had most to dread. However that may be, it was the boldest stroke I have played in my whole life.

I entered with an easy and unconstrained air and asked a child who was playing at tops in the courtyard where his father was. Instead of replying, the child went to call his mother, and directly afterwards appeared a pretty woman in the family way, who politely asked me my business with her husband, apologising for his absence.

"I am sorry," I said, "to hear that my gossip is not in, though at the same time I am delighted to make the acquaintance of his charming wife."

"Your gossip? You will be M. Vetturi, then? My husband told me you had kindly promised to be the godfather of our next child. I am delighted to know you, but my husband will be very vexed to have been away."

"I hope he will soon return, as I wanted to ask him for a night's lodging. I dare not go anywhere in the state you see me."

"You shall have the best bed in the house, and I will get you a good supper. My husband, when he comes back, will thank Your Excellence for doing us so much honour. He went away with all his people an hour ago, and I don't expect him back for three or four days."

"Why is he away for such a long time, my dear madame?"

"You have not heard, then, that two prisoners have escaped from The Leads? One is a noble and the other a private individual named Casanova. My husband has received a letter from Messer-Grande ordering him to make search for them; if he finds them, he will take them back to Venice, and, if not, he will return here, but he will be on the lookout for three days at least."

"I am sorry for this accident, my dear madame, but I should not like to put you out, and indeed I should be glad to lie down immediately."

"You shall do so, and my mother shall attend to your wants. But what is the matter with your knees?"

"I fell down whilst hunting on the mountains and gave myself some severe wounds and am much weakened by loss of blood."

"Oh! my poor gentleman, my poor gentleman! But my mother will cure you."

She called her mother, and, having told her of my necessities, she went out. This pretty *sbirress* had not the wit of her profession, for the story I had told her sounded like a fairy tale. On horseback with white silk stockings! Hunting in sarcenet, without cloak and without a man! Her husband would make fine game of her when he came back, but God bless her for her kind heart and benevolent stupidity! Her

mother tended me with all the politeness I should have met with in the best families. The worthy woman treated me like a mother and called me "son" as she attended to my wounds. The name sounded pleasantly in my ears and did no little towards my cure by the sentiments it awoke in my breast. If I had been less taken up with the position I was in, I should have repaid her care with some evident marks of gratitude I felt, but the place I was in and the part I was playing made the situation too serious a one for me to think of anything else.

This kindly woman, after looking at my knees and my thighs, told me I must make up my mind to suffer a little pain, but that I might be sure of being cured by the morning. All I had to do was to bear the application of medicated linen to my wounds and not to stir till the next day. I promised to bear the pain patiently and to do exactly as she told me.

I was given an excellent supper and ate and drank with good appetite. I then gave myself up to treatment and fell asleep whilst my nurse was attending to me. I suppose she undressed me as she would a child, but I remembered nothing about it when I woke up—I was, in fact, totally unconscious. Though I had made a good supper, I had done so only to satisfy my craving for food and to regain my strength, and sleep came to me with an irresistible force, as my physical exhaustion did not leave me the power of arguing myself out of it. I took my supper at six o'clock in the evening, and I heard six striking as I awoke. I seemed to have been enchanted. Rousing myself up and gathering my wits together, I first took off the linen bandages, and I was astonished to find my wounds healed and quite free from pain. I did my hair, dressed myself in less than five minutes and, finding the door of my room open, went downstairs, crossed the court and left the house behind me, without appearing to notice two individuals who were standing outside and must have been *sbirri*. I made haste to lengthen the distance between me and the place where I had found the kindest hospitality, the utmost politeness, the most tender care and, best of all, new health and strength, and, as I walked, I could not help feeling terrified at the danger I had been in. I shuddered involuntarily; and at the present moment, after so many years, I still shudder when I think of the peril to which I had so heedlessly exposed myself. I wondered how I managed to go in and still more how I got out; it seemed absurd that I should not be followed. For five hours I tramped on, keeping to the woods and mountains, not meeting a soul besides a few countryfolk and turning neither to the right nor to the left.

It was not yet noon when, as I went along my way, I stopped short at the sound of a bell. I was on high ground, and, looking in the direction from which the sound came, I saw a little church in the valley and many people going towards it to hear mass. My heart desired to express thankfulness for the protection of Providence, and, though all nature was a temple worthy of its Creator, custom drew me

to the church. When men are in trouble, every passing thought seems an inspiration. It was All Souls' Day. I went down the hill and came into the church and saw, to my astonishment, M. Marc Antoine Grimani, the nephew of the State Inquisitor, with Madame Marie Visani, his wife. I made my bow, which was returned, and, after I had heard mass, M. Grimani followed me by himself, and, when I left the church, he got near me and called me by my name, saying, "What are you doing here, Casanova, and what has become of your friend?"

"I gave him what little money I had for him to escape by another road, whilst I, without a penny in my pocket, am endeavouring to reach a place of safety by this way. If Your Excellence would kindly give me some help, it would speed my journey for me."

"I can't give you anything, but you will find recluses on your way who won't let you die of hunger. But tell me how you contrived to pierce the roof of The Leads."

"The story is an interesting one, but it would take up too much time, and in the meanwhile the recluses might eat up the food which is to keep me from dying of hunger."

With this sarcasm I made him a profound bow and went upon my way. In spite of my great want, his refusal pleased me, as it made me think myself a better gentleman than the "excellence" who had referred me to the charity of recluses. I heard at Paris afterwards that, when his wife heard of it, she reproached him for his hard-hearted behaviour. There can be no doubt that kindly and generous feelings are more often to be found in the hearts of women than of men.

I continued my journey till sunset. Weary and faint with hunger, I stopped at a good-looking house which stood by itself. I asked to speak to the master, and the porter told me that he was not in, as he had gone to a wedding on the other side of the river and would be away for two days, but that he had bidden him to welcome all his friends while he was away. Providence, luck, chance—whichever you like.

I went in and was treated to a good supper and a good bed. I found by the addresses of some letters which were lying about that I was being entertained in the house of M. Rombenchi, a consul, of what nation I know not. I wrote a letter to him and sealed it to await his return. After making an excellent supper and having had a good sleep, I rose and, dressing myself carefully, set out again without being able to leave the porter any mark of my gratitude and shortly afterwards crossed the river, promising to pay when I came back. After walking for five hours, I dined in a monastery of Capuchins, who are very useful to people in my position. I then set out again, feeling fresh and strong, and walked along at a good pace till three o'clock. I halted at a house which I found from a countryman belonged to a friend of mine. I walked in, asked if the master was at home and was shown into a room where he was writing by himself. I stepped forward to greet him, but, as soon as he saw me, he seemed horrified and bade me be gone forthwith, giving me idle and insulting reasons for his

behaviour. I explained to him how I was situated and asked him to let me have sixty sequins on my note of hand, drawn on M. de Bragadin. He replied that he could not so much as give me a glass of water, since he dreaded the wrath of the Tribunal for my very presence in his house. He was a stockbroker, about sixty years old, and was under great obligations to me. His inhuman refusal produced quite a different effect on me than that of M. Grimani. Whether from rage, indignation or nature, I took him by the collar, showed him my pike, and raising my voice, threatened to kill him. Trembling all over, he took a key from his pocket and, showing me a bureau, told me he kept money there and I had only to open it and take what I wanted; I told him to open it himself. He did so, and, on his opening a drawer containing gold, I told him to count me out six sequins.

"You asked me for sixty."

"Yes, that was when I was asking a loan of you as a friend; but, since I owe the money to force, I require six only, and I will give you no note of hand. You shall be repaid at Venice, where I shall write of the pass to which you forced me, you cowardly wretch!"

"I beg your pardon! Take the sixty sequins, I entreat you."

"No, no more. I am going on my way, and I advise you not to hinder me, lest in my despair I come back and burn your house about your ears."

I went out and walked for two hours, until the approach of night and weariness made me stop short at the house of a farmer, where I had a bad supper and a bed of straw. In the morning I bought an old overcoat and hired an ass to journey on, and near Feltre I bought a pair of boots. In this guise I passed the hut called the Scala. There was a guard there who, much to my delight, as the reader will guess, did not even honour me by asking my name. I then took a two-horse carriage and got to Borgo di Valsugana in good time and found Father Balbi at the inn I had told him of. If he had not greeted me first, I should not have known him. A greatcoat and a low hat over a thick cotton cap, disguised him to admiration. He told me that a farmer had given him these articles in exchange for my cloak, that he had arrived without difficulty and was faring well. He was kind enough to tell me that he had not expected to see me, as he did not believe my promise to rejoin him was made in good faith. Possibly I should have been wise not to, undeceive him on this count.

I passed the following day in the inn, without getting out of my bed, I wrote more than twenty letters to Venice, in many of which I explained what I had been obliged to do to get six sequins.

The monk wrote impudent letters to his superior, Father Barbarigo, and to his brother nobles and love letters to the servant girls who had been his ruin. I took the lace off my dress and sold my hat and thus got rid of a gay appearance unsuitable to my position, as it made me too much an object of notice.

The next day I went to Pergina and lay there and was visited by a young Count d'Alberg, who had discovered in some way or other

that we had escaped from the state prisons of Venice. From Pergina I went to Trent and from there to Bolzan, where, needing money for my dress, linen and the continuation of my journey, I introduced myself to an old banker named Mensch, who gave me a man to send to Venice with a letter to M. de Bragadin. In the meantime the old banker put me in a good inn, where I spent in bed the six days the messenger was away. He brought me the sum of a hundred sequins, and my first care was to clothe my companion and afterwards myself. Every day I found the society of the wretched Balbi more intolerable. "But for me you would never have escaped" was continually in his mouth, and he kept reminding me that I had promised him half of whatever money I got. He made love to all the servant girls, and, as he had neither the face nor the figure to please them, his attentions were returned with good, hearty slaps, which he bore patiently, but was as outrageous as ever in the course of twenty-four hours. I was amused, but at the same time vexed to be coupled to a man of so low a nature.

We travelled post, and in three days we got to Munich, where I went to lodge at the sign of The Stag. There I found two young Venetians of the Cantarini family, who had been some time in company with Count Pompei, a Veronese; but, not knowing them and having no longer any need of depending on recluses for my daily bread, I did not care to pay my respects to them. It was otherwise with Countess Coronini, whom I had known at St. Justine's Convent in Venice and who stood very well with the Bavarian court.

This illustrious lady, then seventy years old, gave me a good reception and promised to speak on my behalf to the Elector, with a view to his granting me an asylum in his country. The next day, having fulfilled her promise, she told me that His Highness had nothing to say against me, but that, as for Balbi, there was no safety for him in Bavaria, for, as a fugitive monk, he might be claimed by the monks at Munich and His Highness had no wish to meddle with the monks. The countess advised me therefore to get him out of the town as soon as possible, for him to fly to some other quarter and thus to avoid the bad turn which his beloved brethren, the monks were certain to do him.

Feeling in duty bound to look after the interests of the wretched fellow, I went to the Elector's confessor to ask him to give Balbi letters of introduction to some town in Swabia. The confessor, a Jesuit, did not give the lie to the fine reputation of his brethren of the order; his reception of me was as discourteous as it well could be. He told me in a careless way that in Munich I was well known. I asked him without flinching if I was to take this as a piece of good or bad news; but he made no answer and left me standing. Another priest told me that he had gone out to verify the truth of a miracle of which the whole town was talking.

"What miracle is that, reverend father?" I said.

"The Empress, the widow of Charles VII, whose body is still exposed to the public gaze, has warm feet, although she is dead."

"Perhaps something keeps them warm."

"You can assure yourself personally of the truth of this wonderful circumstance."

To neglect such an opportunity would have been to lose the chance of mirth or edification, and I was as desirous of the one as of the other. Wishing to be able to boast that I had seen a miracle—and one, moreover, of a peculiar interest to myself, who have always had the misfortune to suffer from cold feet—I went to see the mighty dead. It was quite true that her feet were warm, but the matter was capable of a simple explanation, as the feet of Her Defunct Majesty were turned towards a burning lamp at a little distance off. A dancer of my acquaintance, whom curiosity had brought there with the rest, came up to me, complimented me upon my fortunate escape and told me everybody was talking about it. His news pleased me, as it is always a good thing to interest the public. This son of Terpsichore asked me to dinner, and I was glad to accept his invitation. His name was Michele dell' Agata, and his wife was the pretty Gandela whom I had known sixteen years ago at old Malipiero's. The Gandela was enchanted to see me and hear from my own lips the story of my wondrous escape. She interested herself on behalf of the monk and offered me to give him a letter of introduction to Canon Bassi, of Bologna, who was dean of St. Maurice's Chapter at Augsburg and a friend of hers. I took advantage of the offer, and she forthwith wrote me the letter, telling me that I need not trouble myself any more about the monk, as she was sure that the dean would take care of him and even make it all right at Venice.

Delighted at getting rid of him in so honourable a manner, I ran to the inn, told him what I had done, gave him the letter and promised not to abandon him in the case of the dean not giving him a good welcome. I got him a good carriage and started him off the next day at daybreak. Four days after Balbi wrote that the dean had received him with great kindness, given him a room in the deanery, dressed him as an abbé, introduced him to Prince-Bishop of Armstadt, and obtained assurances of his safety from the civil magistrates. Furthermore, the dean had promised to keep him till he obtained his secularization from Rome and with it freedom to return to Venice, for, as soon as he ceased to be a monk, the Tribunal would have no lien upon him. Father Balbi finished by asking me to send him a few sequins for pocket money, as he was too much of a gentleman to ask the dean, "who," quoth the ungrateful fellow, "is not gentleman enough to offer to give me anything." I gave him no answer.

As I was now alone in peace and quietness, I thought seriously of regaining my health, for my sufferings had given me nervous spasms which might become dangerous. I put myself on a diet, and in three weeks I was perfectly well. In the meanwhile Madame Rivière came from Dresden with her son and two daughters. She was going to Paris to marry off the elder. The son had been diligent and would have passed for a young man of culture. The elder daughter, who was going

to marry an actor, was extremely beautiful, an accomplished dancer, and played on the clavichord like a professional and was altogether most charming and graceful. This pleasant family was delighted to see me again, and I thought myself fortunate when Madame Rivière, anticipating my wishes, intimated to me that my company as far as Paris would give them great pleasure. I had nothing to say respecting the expenses of the journey. I had to accept their offer in its entirety. My design was to settle in Paris, and I took this stroke of fortune as an omen of success in the only town where the blind goddess freely dispenses her favours to those who leave themselves to be guided by her and know how to take advantage of her gifts. And, as the reader will see by and by, I was not mistaken; but all the gifts of Fortune were of no avail, since I abused them all by my folly. Fifteen months under The Leads should have made me aware of my weak points, but in point of fact I needed a little longer stay to learn how to cure myself of my failings.

Madame Rivière wished to take me with her, but she could not put off her departure, and I required a week's delay to get money and letters from Venice. She promised to wait a week in Strasburg, and we agreed that, if possible, I would join her there. She left Munich on the eighteenth of December.

Two days afterwards I got from Venice the bill of exchange for which I was waiting. I made haste to pay my debts and immediately afterwards started for Augsburg, not so much for the sake of seeing Father Balbi as because I wanted to make the acquaintance of the kindly dean who had rid me of him. I reached Augsburg in seven hours after leaving Munich and went immediately to the house of the good ecclesiastic. He was not in, but I found Balbi in an abbé's dress, with his hair covered with white powder, which set off in a new but not a pleasing manner the beauties of his complexion of about the same colour as a horse-chestnut. Balbi was under forty, but decidedly ugly, having one of those faces in which baseness, cowardice, impudence and malice are plainly expressed, joining to his advantage a tone of voice and manners admirably calculated to repulse anyone inclined to do him a service. I found him comfortably housed, well looked after and well clad; he had books and all the requisites for writing. I complimented him upon his situation, calling him a fortunate fellow and applying the same epithet to myself for having gained him all the advantages he enjoyed and the hope of one day becoming a secular priest. But the ungrateful hound, instead of thanking me, reproached me for having craftily rid myself of him and added that, as I was going to Paris, I might as well take him with me, as the dullness of Augsburg was almost killing him.

"What do you want at Paris?"

"What do you want yourself?"

"To put my talents to account."

"So do I."

"Well, then, you don't require me; you can fly on your own wings.

The people who are taking me to Paris would probably not care for me if I had you for a companion."

"You promised not to abandon me."

"Can a man who leaves another well provided for and with an assured future be said to abandon him?"

"Well provided for! I have not got a penny."

"What do you want with money? You have a good table, a good lodging, clothes, linen, attendance and so forth. And if you want pocket money, why don't you ask your brethren the monks?"

"Ask monks for money? They take it, but they don't give it."

"Ask your friends, then."

"I have no friends."

"You are to be pitied, but the reason probably is that you have never been a friend to anyone. You ought to say masses; that is a good way of getting money."

"I am unknown."

"You must wait, then, till you are known, and then you can make up for lost time."

"Your suggestions are idle; you will surely give me a few sequins."

"I can't spare any."

"Wait for the dean. He will be back to-morrow. You can talk to him and persuade him to lend me some money. You can tell him that I will pay it back."

"I cannot wait, for I am setting out on my journey directly, and, were he here this moment, I should not have the face to tell him to lend you money after all his generous treatment of you and when he or anyone can see that you have everything you need."

After this sharp dialogue I left him and, travelling post, set out, displeased with myself for having given such advantages to a man wholly unworthy of them. In the March following I had a letter from the good Dean Bassi, in which he told me how Balbi had run away, taking with him one of his servant girls, a sum of money, a gold watch and a dozen silver spoons and forks. He did not know where he was gone.

Towards the end of the same year I learnt at Paris that the wretched man had taken refuge at Coire, the capital of the Grisons, where he asked to be made a member of the Calvinistic Church and to be recognised as lawful husband of a woman with him; but in a short time the community discovered that the new convert was no good and expelled him from the bosom of the Church of Calvin. Our ne'er-do-well having no more money, his wife left him, and he, not knowing what to do next, took the desperate step of going to Bressa, a town within the Venetian territory, where he sought the governor, telling him his name, the story of his flight and his repentance, begging the governor to take him under his protection and obtain his pardon.

The first effect of the *podestà's* protection was that he imprisoned the penitent and then wrote to the Tribunal to know what to do with him. The Tribunal told him to send Father Balbi in chains to Venice,

and on his arrival Messer-Grande gave him over to the Tribunal, which put him once more under The Leads. He did not find Count Asquin there, as the Tribunal, out of consideration for his great age, had moved him to The Fours a couple of months after our escape.

Five or six years later I heard that the Tribunal, after keeping the unlucky monk for two years under The Leads, had sent him to his convent. There his Superior, fearing lest his flock should take contagion from this scabby sheep, sent him to their original monastery near Feltre, a lonely building on a height. However, Balbi did not stop there six months. Having "taken to the woods," he went to Rome and threw himself at the feet of Pope Rezzonico, who absolved him of his sins and released him from his monastic vows. Balbi, now a secular priest, returned to Venice, where he lived a dissolute and wretched life. In 1783 he died the death of Diogenes, minus the wit of the cynic.

At Strasburg I rejoined Madame Rivière and her delightful family, from whom I received a sincere and hearty welcome. We were staying at the Hôtel de l'Esprit, and we passed a few days there most pleasantly, afterwards setting out in an excellent travelling carriage for *Paris the Only, Paris the Universal*. During the journey I thought myself bound to the expense of making it a pleasant one, as I had not to put my hand in my pocket for other expenses. The charms of Mlle. Rivière enchanted me, but I should have esteemed myself wanting in gratitude and respect to this worthy family if I had darted at her a single amorous glance or if I had let her suspect my feelings for her by a single word. In fact I thought myself obliged to play the heavy father, though my age did not fit me for the part, and I lavished on this agreeable family all the care which can be given in return for pleasant society, a seat in a comfortable travelling carriage, an excellent table and a good bed.

We reached Paris on the fifth of January, 1757, and I went to the house of my friend Baletti, who received me with open arms and assured me that, though I had not written, he had been expecting me, since he judged that I would strive to put the greatest possible distance between myself and Venice, and he could think of no other retreat for me than Paris. The whole house kept holiday when my arrival became known, and I have never met with more sincere regard than in that delightful family. I greeted with enthusiasm the father and mother, whom I found exactly the same as when I had seen them last in 1752, but I was struck with astonishment at the daughter, whom I had left a child, for she was now a tall and well shaped girl. Mlle. Baletti was fifteen years old, and her mother had brought her up with care, had given her the best masters, virtue, grace, talents, a good manner, tact, a knowledge of society—in short, all that a clever mother can give to a dear daughter.

After finding a pleasant lodging near the Baletti's, I took a coach and went to the Hôtel de Bourbon, with the intention of calling on M. de Bernis, who was then Chief Secretary for Foreign Affairs. I had good reasons for relying on his assistance. He was out; he had

gone to Versailles. In Paris one must go sharply to work and, as it is vulgarly but forcibly said, "strike while the iron is hot." As I was impatient to see what kind of reception I should get from the liberal-minded lover of my fair M— M—, I went to the Pont-Royal, took a hackney coach and went to Versailles. Again bad luck! Our coaches had passed each other on the way, and my humble equipage had not caught His Excellency's eye. M. de Bernis had returned to Paris with Count de Castellana, the ambassador from Naples, and I determined to return also; but, when I got to the gate, I saw a mob of people running here and there in the greatest confusion, and from all sides I heard the cry, "The King is assassinated! The King is assassinated!"

My frightened coachman thought only of getting on his way, but the coach was stopped. I was made to get out and taken to the guard-room, where there were several people already, and in less than three minutes there were twenty of us, all under arrest, all astonished at the situation and all as guilty as I. We sat glum and silent, looking at each other without daring to speak. I knew not what to think, and, not believing in enchantment, I began to think I must be dreaming. Every face expressed surprise, as everyone, though innocent, was more or less afraid.

We were not left in this disagreeable position for long, as in five minutes an officer came in and after some polite apologies told us we were free.

"The King is wounded," he said, "and he has been taken to his room. The assassin, whom nobody knows, is under arrest. M. de la Martinière is being looked for everywhere."

When I had got back to my coach and was thinking myself lucky for being there, a gentlemanly-looking young man came up to me and besought me to give him a seat in my coach, and he would gladly pay half the fare; but, in spite of the laws of politeness, I refused his request. I may possibly have been wrong. On any other occasion I should have been most happy to give him a place, but there are times when prudence does not allow one to be polite. I was about three hours on the way, and in this short time I was overtaken every minute by at least two hundred couriers riding at a breakneck pace. Every minute brought a new courier, and every courier shouted his news to the winds. The first told me what I knew already; then I heard that the king had been bled, that the wound was not mortal and finally that the wound was trifling and that His Majesty could go to the Trianon if he liked.

Fortified with this good news, I went to Silvia's and found the family at table. I told them I had just come from Versailles.

"The King has been assassinated."

"Not at all; he is able to go to the Trianon or the Parc-aux-Cerfs if he likes. M. de la Martinière has bled him and found him to be in no danger. The assassin has been arrested, and the wretched man will be burnt, drawn with red-hot pincers and quartered."

This news was soon spread abroad by Silvia's servants, and a crowd of the neighbours came to hear what I had to say, and I had to repeat the same thing ten times over. At this period the Parisians fancied that they loved the King. They certainly acted to admiration the part of loyal subjects. At the present day they are more enlightened and would love only the sovereign whose sole desire is the happiness of his people, and such a king—the first citizen of a great nation—not only Paris and its suburbs, but all France will be eager to love and obey. As for kings like Louis XV, they have become totally impracticable; but, if there are any such, however much they may be supported by interested parties, in the eyes of public opinion they will be dishonoured and disgraced before their bodies are in a grave and their names are written in the book of history.

CHAPTER 55

ONCE more, then, I was in Paris, which I ought to regard as my fatherland, since I could return no more to the country which gave me birth—an unworthy country, yet in spite of all ever dear to me, possibly on account of early impressions and early prejudices or possibly because the beauties of Venice are really unmatched in the world. But mighty Paris is a place of good luck or ill, as one takes it, and it was my part to catch the favouring gale.

Paris was not wholly new to me; as my readers know, I had spent two years there, but I must confess that, having then no other aim than to pass the time pleasantly, I had devoted myself merely to pleasure and enjoyment. Fortune, to whom I had paid no court, had not opened to me her golden doors; but now I felt that I must treat her more reverently and attach myself to the throng of her favoured sons, whom she loads with her gifts. I understood now that, the nearer one draws to the sun, the more one feels the warmth of its rays. I saw that to attain my end, I should have to employ all my mental and physical talents, that I must make friends of the great and take the cut from all whom I found it to be my interest to please. To follow the plans suggested by these thoughts, I saw that I must avoid what is called "bad company," that I must give up my old habits and pretensions, which would be sure to make me enemies who would have no scruple in representing me as a trifler and not fit to be trusted with affairs of any importance.

I believe I thought wisely, and the reader, I hope, will be of the same opinion. "I will be reserved," said I, "in what I say and do, and thus I shall get a reputation for discretion which will bring its reward."

I was in no anxiety on the score of present needs, as I could reckon on a monthly allowance of a hundred crowns, which my adopted father, the good and generous M. de Bragadin, sent me, and I found this sum sufficient in the meanwhile, for with a little self-restraint one can live cheaply in Paris and cut a good figure at the same time.

I was obliged to wear a good suit of clothes and have a decent lodging, for in all large towns the most important thing is outward show, by which at the beginning one is always judged. My anxiety was only for the pressing needs of the moment, for, to speak the truth, I had neither clothes nor linen—in a word, nothing.

If my relations with the French ambassador are recalled, it will be found natural that my first idea was to address myself to him, as I knew him sufficiently well to reckon on his serving me.

Being perfectly certain that the porter would tell me that my lord was engaged, I took care to have a letter, and in the morning I went to the Palais Bourbon. The porter took my letter, and I gave him my address and returned home.

Wherever I went, I had to tell the story of my escape from The Leads. This became a service almost as tiring as the flight itself had been, as it took me two hours to tell my tale, without the slightest bit of fancy-work; but I had to be polite to the curious inquirers and pretend that I believed them moved by the most affectionate interest in my welfare. In general, the best way to please is to take for granted the benevolence of all with whom one has relations.

I stopped at Silvia's, and, as the evening was quieter than the night before, I had time to congratulate myself on all the friendship they showed me. The girl was, as I have said, fifteen years old, and I was in every way charmed with her. I complimented the mother on the good results of her education, and I did not even think of guarding myself from falling a victim to her charms. I had so lately taken such well founded and philosophical resolutions! and I was not yet sufficiently at my ease to flatter myself I was worth the trouble of being tempted. I left at an early hour, impatient to see what kind of answer the minister had sent me. I had not long to wait, and I received a short letter appointing a meeting for two o'clock in the afternoon. It may be guessed that I was punctual, and my reception by His Excellency was most flattering. M. de Bernis expressed his pleasure at seeing me after my fortunate escape and at being able to be of service to me. He told me that M— M— had informed him of my escape, and he had flattered himself that the first person I would go and see in Paris would be himself. He showed me the letters from M— M— relating to my arrest and escape, but all the details in the latter were purely imaginary and had no foundation in fact. M— M— was not to blame, as she could write only what she had heard and it was not easy for anyone besides myself to know the real circumstances of my escape. The charming nun said that, no longer buoyed up by the hope of seeing either of the men who alone had made her in love with life, her existence had become a burden to her and she was unfortunate in not being able to take any comfort in religion. "C— C— often comes to see me," she said, "but I grieve to say she is not happy with her husband."

I told M. de Bernis that the account of my flight from The Leads as told by our friend was wholly inaccurate, and I would therefore

take the liberty of writing out the whole story with the minutest details. He challenged me to keep my word, assuring me that he would send a copy to M— M—, and at the same time, with the utmost courtesy, he put a packet of a hundred louis in my hand, telling me that he would think what he could do for me and would advise me as soon as he had any communication to make.

Thus furnished with ample funds, my first care was for my dress; and, this done, I went to work and in a week sent my generous protector the result, giving him permission to have as many copies printed as he liked and to make any use he pleased of it to interest in my behalf such persons as might be of service to me.

Three weeks after the minister summoned me to say that he had spoken of me to M. Erizzo, the Venetian ambassador, who had nothing to say against me but, for fear of embroiling himself with the State Inquisitors declined to receive me. Not wanting anything from him, his refusal did me no harm. M. de Bernis then told me that he had given a copy of my history to Madame la Marquise de Pompadour, and he promised to take the first opportunity of presenting me to this all-powerful lady. "You can present yourself, my dear Casanova," added His Excellence, "to the Duc de Choiseul and M. de Boulogne, the comptroller. You will be well received, and with a little wit you ought to be able to make good use of the latter. He himself will give you the clue, and you will see that 'he who listens obtains.' Try to invent some useful plan for the royal exchequer; don't let it be complicated or chimerical, and, if you don't write it out at too great length, I will give you my opinion on it."

I left the minister in a pleased and grateful mood but extremely puzzled to find a way of increasing the royal revenue. I knew nothing of finance, and, after racking my brains, all that I could think of was new methods of taxation; but all my plans were either absurd or certain to be unpopular, and I rejected them all on consideration.

As soon as I found out that M. de Choiseul was in Paris, I called on him. He received me in his dressing-room, where he was writing while his valet did his hair. He stretched his politeness so far as to interrupt himself several times to ask me questions, but, as soon as I began to reply, His Grace began to write again and, I suspect, did not hear what I was saying; and, though now and again he seemed to be looking at me, it was plain that his eyes and his thoughts were occupied on different objects. In spite of this way of receiving visitors—or me, at all events—M. de Choiseul was a man of wit.

When he had finished writing, he said in Italian that M. de Bernis had told him of some circumstances of my escape, and he added, "Tell me how you succeeded."

"My lord, it would be too long a story; it would take me at least two hours, and Your Grace seems busy."

"Tell me briefly about it."

"However much I speak to the point, I shall take two hours."

"You can keep the details for another time."

"The story is devoid of interest without the details."

"Well, well, you can tell me the whole story in brief, without losing much of the interest."

"Very good; after that I can say no more. I must tell Your Lordship, then, that the State Inquisitors shut me up under The Leads, that after fifteen months and five days of imprisonment I succeeded in piercing the roof; that after many difficulties I reached the chancery by a window and broke open the door; afterwards I got to St. Mark's Place, whence, taking a gondola which bore me to the mainland, I arrived in Paris and have had the honour to pay my duty to Your Lordship."

"But . . . what are The Leads?"

"My Lord, I should take a quarter of an hour, at least, to explain."

"How did you pierce the roof?"

"I could not tell Your Lordship in less than half an hour."

"Why were you shut up?"

"It would be a long tale, my lord."

"I think you are right. The interest of the story lies chiefly in the details."

"I took the liberty of saying as much to Your Grace."

"Well, I must go to Versailles, but I shall be delighted if you will come and see me sometimes. In the meanwhile, M. Casanova, think what I can do for you."

I had been offended at the way in which M. de Choiseul had received me and was inclined to resent it, but the end of our conversation and, above all, the kindly tone of his last words quieted me, and I left him, if not satisfied, at least without bitterness in my heart.

From him I went to M. de Boulogne's, and found him a man of quite a different stamp to the duke in manners, dress and appearance. He received me with great politeness and began by complimenting me on the high place I enjoyed in the opinion of M. de Bernis and on my skill in matters of finance.

I felt that no compliment had been so ill-deserved, and I could hardly help bursting into laughter. My good angel, however, made me keep my countenance.

M. de Boulogne had an old man with him, whose every feature bore the imprint of genius and who inspired me with respect.

"Give me your views," said the comptroller, "either on paper or *viva voce*. You will find me willing to learn and ready to grasp your ideas. Here is M. Paris du Vernai, who wants twenty millions for his military school; and he wishes to get this sum without a charge on the state or emptying the treasury."

"It is God alone, sir, who has the creative power."

"I am not a god," said M. du Vernai, "but, for all that, I have now and then created—but the times have changed."

"Everything," I said, "is more difficult than it used to be; but, in spite of difficulties, I have a plan which would give the King the interest of a hundred millions."

"What expense would there be to the Crown?"

"Merely the cost of receiving."

"The nation, then, would furnish the sum in question?"

"Undoubtedly, but voluntarily."

"I know what you are thinking of."

"You astonish me, sir, as I have told nobody of my plan."

"If you have no other engagement, do me the honour of dining with me to-morrow, and I will tell you what your project is. It is a good one but surrounded, I believe, with insuperable difficulties. Nevertheless, we will talk it over and see what can be done. Will you come?"

"I will do myself that honour."

"Very good, I will expect you at Plaisance."

After he had gone, M. de Boulogne praised his talents and honesty. He was the brother of M. de Montmartel, whom secret history makes the father of Madame de Pompadour, for he was the lover of Madame Poisson at the same time as M. le Normand.

I left the comptroller's and went to walk in the Tuileries, thinking over the strange stroke of luck which had happened to me. I had been told that twenty millions were needed, and I had boasted of being able to get a hundred, without the slightest idea of how it was to be done; and on that a well known man, experienced in the public business, had asked me to dinner, to convince me that he knew what my scheme was. There was something odd and comic about the whole affair, but that corresponded very well with my modes of thought and action. "If he thinks he is going to pump me," said I, "he will find himself mistaken. When he tells me what the plan is, it will rest with me to say he has guessed it or he is wrong, as the inspiration of the moment may suggest. If the question lies within my comprehension, I may perhaps be able to suggest something new; and, if I understand nothing, I will wrap myself up in a mysterious silence, which sometimes produces a good effect. At all events, I will not repulse Fortune when she appears to be favourable to me."

M. de Bernis had told M. de Boulogne that I was a financier only to get me a hearing, as otherwise he might have declined to see me. I was sorry not to be master at least of the jargon of the business, as in that way men have got out of a similar difficulty, and, by knowing the technical terms and nothing more, have made their mark. No matter, I was bound to the engagement. I must put a good face on a bad game and, if necessary, pay with the currency of assurance. The next morning I took a carriage and in a pensive mood told the coachman to take me to M. du Vernai's, at Plaisance, a place a little beyond Vincennes.

I was set down at the door of the famous man who, forty years before, had rescued France on the brink of the precipice down which John Law had almost precipitated her. I went in and saw a great fire burning on the hearth, which was surrounded by seven or eight persons, to whom I was introduced as a friend of the Minister for Foreign Affairs and of the comptroller; afterwards he introduced these gentle-

men to me, giving each his proper title, and I noted that four of them were treasury officials. After making my bow to each, I gave myself over to the worship of Harpocrates and, without too great an air of listening, was all ears and eyes.

The conversation at first was of no special interest, as they were talking of the Seine being frozen over, the ice being a foot thick. Then came the recent death of M. de Fontenelle, then the case of Damien, who would confess nothing, and of the five millions his trial would cost the Crown. Then, coming to war, they praised M. de Soubise, who had been chosen by the King to command the army. Hence the transition was easy to the expenses of the war and how they were to be defrayed.

I listened and was bored, for all they said was so full of technicalities that I could not follow the meaning; and, if silence can ever be imposing, my determined silence of an hour and a half's duration ought to have made me seem a very important personage in the eyes of these gentlemen. At last, just as I was beginning to yawn, dinner was announced, and I was another hour and a half without opening my mouth, except to do honour to an excellent repast. Directly the dessert had been served, M. du Vernai asked me to follow him into a neighbouring apartment and leave the other guests at the table. I followed him, and we crossed a hall where we found a man of good aspect, about fifty years old, who followed us into a closet and was introduced to me by M. du Vernai under the name of Calsabigi. Directly after two superintendents of the treasury came in, and M. du Vernai smilingly gave me a folio book, saying, "That, I think, M. Casanova, is your plan."

I took the book and read, *Lottery consisting of ninety tickets, to be drawn every month, only one in eighteen to be a winning number.* I gave him back the book and said, with the utmost calmness:

"I confess, sir, that is exactly my idea."

"You have been anticipated, then; the project is by M. de Calsabigi here."

"I am delighted, not at being anticipated but to find that we think alike; but may I ask you why you have not carried out the plan?"

"Several very plausible reasons have been given against it, which have had no decisive answers."

"I can conceive only one reason against it," said I, coolly. "Perhaps the King would not allow his subjects to gamble."

"Never mind that, the King will let his subjects gamble as much as they like; the question is, will they gamble?"

"I wonder how anyone can have any doubt on that score, as the winners are certain of being paid."

"Let us grant, then, that they will gamble. How is the money to be found?"

"How is the money to be found? The simplest thing in the world. All you want is a decree in council authorising you to draw on the

treasury. All I want is for the nation to believe that the King can afford to pay a hundred millions."

"A hundred millions!"

"Yes, a hundred millions, sir. We must dazzle people."

"But, if France is to believe that the Crown can afford to pay a hundred millions, it must believe that the Crown can afford to lose a hundred millions, and who is going to believe that? Do you?"

"To be sure I do, for the Crown, before it could lose a hundred millions, would have received at least a hundred and fifty millions, and so there need be no anxiety on that score."

"I am not the only person who has doubts on the subject. You must grant the possibility of the Crown losing an enormous sum at the first drawing?"

"Certainly, sir, but between possibility and reality is all the region of the infinite. Indeed, I may say that it would be a great piece of good fortune if the Crown were to lose largely on the first drawing."

"A piece of bad fortune, you mean, surely?"

"A bad fortune to be desired. You know that all the insurance companies are rich. I will undertake to prove before all the mathematicians in Europe that the King is bound to gain one in five in this lottery. That is the secret. You will confess that reason ought to yield to a mathematical proof?"

"Yes, of course; but how is it that the Castelletto cannot guarantee the Crown a certain gain?"

"Neither the Castelletto nor anybody in the world can guarantee absolutely that the King shall always win. What guarantees us against any suspicion of sharp practice is the drawing once a month, as then the public is sure that the holder of the lottery may lose."

"Will you be good enough to express your sentiments on the subject before the council?"

"I will do so with much pleasure."

"You will answer all objections?"

"I think I can promise as much."

"Will you give me your plan?"

"Not before it is accepted and I am guaranteed a reasonable profit."

"But your plan may possibly be the same as the one before us."

"I think not. This is the first time I have met M. de Calsabigi, and, as he has not shown me his scheme and I have not communicated mine to him, it is improbable, not to say impossible, that we should agree in all respects. Besides, in my plan I clearly show how much profit the Crown ought to get per annum."

"It might, therefore, be formed by a company who would pay the Crown a fixed sum?"

"I think not."

"Why?"

"For this reason: the only thing which would make the lottery pay would be an irresistible current of public opinion in its favour. I should not care to have anything to do with it in the service of a company,

who, thinking to increase their profits, might extend their operations, a course which would entail certain loss."

"I don't see how."

"In a thousand ways which I will explain to you another time and which I am sure you can guess for yourself. In short, if I am to have any voice in the matter, it must be a government lottery or nothing."

"M. de Calsabigi thinks so, too."

"I am delighted to hear it, but not at all surprised, for, thinking on the same lines, we are bound to arrive at the same results."

"Have you anybody ready for the Castelletto?"

"I shall need only intelligent machines, of whom there are plenty in France."

I went out for a moment and found them in groups on my return, discussing my project with great earnestness.

M. Calsabigi, after asking me a few questions, took my hand, which he shook heartily, saying he should like to have some further conversation with me; returning the friendly pressure, I told him that I should esteem it as an honour to be numbered amongst his friends. Thereupon I left my address with M. du Vernai and took my leave, satisfied by my inspection of the faces before me that they all had a high opinion of my talents.

Three days after M. de Calsabigi called on me; and, after receiving him in my best style, I said that, if I had not called on him, it was only because I did not wish to be troublesome. He told me that my decisive way of speaking had made a great impression, and he was certain that, if I cared to take an interest with the comptroller, we could set up the lottery and make a large profit.

"I think so, too," said I, "but the financiers will make a much larger profit, and yet they do not seem anxious about it. They have not communicated with me, but it is their lookout, as I shall not make it my chief aim."

"You will undoubtedly hear something about it to-day, for I know for a fact that M. de Boulogne has spoken of you to M. de Courteuil."

"Very good, but I assure you I did not ask him to do so."

After some further conversation he asked me, in the most friendly manner possible, to come and dine with him, and I accepted his invitation with great pleasure; and, just as we were starting, I received a note from M. de Bernis, in which he said that, if I could come to Versailles the next day, he would present me to Madame de Pompadour and that I should have an opportunity of seeing M. de Boulogne.

In high glee at this happy chance, less from vanity than policy, I let M. de Calsabigi read the letter, and I was pleased to see him opening his eyes as he read it.

"You can force Du Vernai himself to accept the lottery," he said, "and your fortune is made—if you are not too rich already to care about such matters."

"Nobody is ever rich enough to despise good fortune, especially when it is not due to favour."

"Very true. We have been doing our utmost for two years to get the plan accepted and have met with nothing beyond foolish objections, which you have crushed to pieces. Nevertheless, our plans must be very similar. Believe me, it will be best for us to work in concert, for by yourself you would find insuperable difficulties in the working, and you will find no 'intelligent machines' in Paris. My brother will do all the work, and you will be able to reap the advantages at your ease."

"Are you, then, not the inventor of the scheme which has been shown me?"

"No, it is the work of my brother."

"Shall I have the pleasure of seeing him?"

"Certainly. His body is feeble, but his mind is in all its vigour. We shall see him directly."

The brother was not a man of very pleasing appearance, as he was covered with a kind of leprosy; but that did not prevent him having a good appetite, writing and enjoying all his bodily and intellectual faculties; he talked well and amusingly. He never went into society, as, besides his personal disfigurement, he was tormented with an irresistible and frequent desire of scratching himself, now in one place, now in another; and, as all scratching is accounted an abominable thing in Paris, he preferred to be able to use his finger-nails to the pleasures of society. He was pleased to say that, believing in God and His works, he was persuaded that his nails had been given him to procure the only solace he was capable of in the kind of fury with which he was tormented.

"You are a believer, then, in final causes? I think you are right, but still I believe you would have scratched yourself if God had forgotten to give you any nails."

My remarks made him laugh, and he then began to speak of our common business, and I soon found him to be a man of intellect. He was the elder of the two brothers and a bachelor. He was expert in all kinds of calculations, an accomplished financier, with a universal knowledge of commerce, a good historian, a wit, a poet and a man of gallantry. His birthplace was Leghorn, he had been in a government office at Naples and had come to Paris with M. de l'Hôpital. His brother was also a man of learning and talent but in every respect his inferior.

He showed me the pile of papers, on which he had worked out all the problems referring to the lottery.

"If you think you can do without me," said he, "I must compliment you on your abilities; but I think you will find yourself mistaken, for, if you have no practical knowledge of the matter and no business men to help you, your theories will not carry you far. What will you do after you have obtained the decree? When you speak before the council, if you take my advice, you will fix a date after which you are not to be held responsible—that is to say, after which you will have nothing more to do with it. Unless you do so, you will be certain to

encounter trifling and procrastination which will defer your plan to the Greek Kalends. On the other hand, I can assure you that M. du Vernai would be very glad to see us join hands."

Very much inclined to take these gentlemen into partnership, for the good reason that I could not do without them, but taking care that they should suspect nothing, I went down with the younger brother, who introduced me to his wife before dinner. I found present an old lady well known in Paris under the name of Générale La Mothe, famous for her beauty and her gout, another lady somewhat advanced in years, who was called Baroness Blanche and was still the mistress of M. de Vaux, another styled "the President's lady," and a fourth, fair as the dawn, Madame Razzetti, from Piedmont, the wife of one of the violin players at the opera and said to be courted by M. de Fondpertuis, the superintendent of the opera.

We sat down to dinner, but I was silent and absorbed, all my thoughts being monopolised by the lottery. In the evening, at Silvia's, I was pronounced absent and pensive, and so I was, in spite of the sentiment with which Mademoiselle Baletti inspired me, a sentiment which every day grew in strength.

I set out for Versailles next morning two hours before daybreak and was welcomed by M. de Bernis, who said he would bet that, but for him, I should never have discovered my talent for finance.

"M. de Boulogne tells me you astonished M. du Vernai, who is generally esteemed one of the acutest men in France. If you will take my advice, Casanova, you will keep up that acquaintance and pay him assiduous court. I may tell you that the lottery is certain to be established, that it will be your doing and that you ought to make something considerable out of it. As soon as the King goes out to hunt, be at hand in the private apartments, and I will seize a favourable moment for introducing you to the famous marquise. Afterwards go to the Office for Foreign Affairs, and introduce yourself in my name to the Abbé de la Villette. He is the chief official there, and will give you a good reception."

M. de Boulogne told me that, as soon as the council of the military school had given their consent, he would have the decree for the establishment of the lottery published, and he urged me to communicate to him any ideas I might have on the subject of finance.

At noon Madame de Pompadour passed through the private apartments with the Prince de Soubise, and my patron hastened to point me out to the illustrious lady. She made me a graceful curtsy and told me she had been much interested in the subject of my flight.

"Do you go," said she, "to see your ambassador?"

"I show my respect to him, madame, by keeping away."

"I hope you mean to settle in France."

"It would be my dearest wish to do so, madame, but I stand in need of patronage, and I know that in France patronage is given only to men of talent, which is for me a discouraging circumstance."

"On the contrary, I think you have reason to be hopeful, as you

have some good friends. I myself shall be delighted if I can be of any assistance to you."

As the fair marquise moved on, I could only stammer forth my gratitude.

I next went to the Abbé de la Ville, who received me with the utmost courtesy and told me he would remember me at the earliest opportunity.

Versailles was a beautiful spot, but I had only compliments and not invitations to expect there, so, after leaving M. de la Ville, I went to an inn to get some dinner. As I was sitting down, an abbé of excellent appearance (just like dozens of other French abbés) accosted me politely and asked me if I objected to our dining together. I always thought the company of a pleasant man a thing to be desired, so I granted his request; and, as soon as he sat down, he complimented me on the distinguished manner in which I had been treated by M. de la Ville. "I was there writing a letter," said he, "and I could hear all the obliging things the abbé said to you. May I ask, sir, how you obtained access to him?"

"If you really wish to know, I may be able to tell you."

"It is pure curiosity on my part."

"Well, then, I will say nothing, from pure prudence."

"I beg your pardon."

"Certainly, with pleasure."

Having thus shut the mouth of the curious impertinent, he confined his conversation to ordinary and more agreeable topics. After dinner, having no further business at Versailles, I made preparations for leaving, on which the abbé begged to be of my company. Although a man who frequents the society of abbés is not thought much more of than one who frequents the society of girls, I told him that, as I was going to Paris in a public conveyance, far from its being a question of permission, I should be only too happy to have the pleasure of his company. On reaching Paris, we parted, after promising to call on each other, and I went to Silvia's and took supper there. The agreeable mistress of the house complimented me on my noble acquaintances and made me promise to cultivate their society.

As soon as I got back to my own lodging, I found a note from M. du Vernai, who requested me to come to the military school at eleven o'clock on the next day, and later in the evening Calsabigi came to me from his brother, with a large sheet of paper containing all the calculations pertaining to the lottery.

Fortune seemed to be in my favour, for this tabular statement came to me like a blessing from on high. Resolving, therefore, to follow the instructions which I pretended to receive indifferently, I went to the military school, and, as soon as I arrived, the conference began. M. d'Alembert had been requested to be present as an expert in arithmetical calculations. If M. du Vernai had been the only person to be consulted, this step would not have been necessary; but the council contained

some obstinate heads who were unwilling to give in. The conference lasted three hours.

After my speech, which lasted only half an hour, M. de Courteuil summed up my arguments, and an hour was passed in stating objections, which I refuted with the greatest ease. I finally told them that no man of honour and learning would volunteer to conduct the lottery on the understanding that it was to win every time and that, if anyone had the impudence to give such an undertaking, they should turn him out of the room forthwith, for it was impossible that such an agreement could be maintained except by some roguery.

This had its effect, for nobody replied; and M. du Vernai remarked that, if the worst came to the worst, the lottery could be suppressed. At this I knew my business was done, and all present, after signing a document which M. du Vernai gave them, took their leave, and I myself left directly afterwards with a friendly leave-taking from M. du Vernai.

M. Calsabigi came to see me the next day, bringing the agreeable news that the affair was settled and that all that was wanting was the publication of the decree.

"I am delighted to hear it," I said, "and I will go to M. de Boulogne's every day and get you appointed chief administrator as soon as I know what I have got for myself."

I took care not to leave a stone unturned in this direction, as I knew that, with the great, promising and keeping a promise are two different things. The decree appeared a week after. Calsabigi was made superintendent, with an allowance of three thousand francs for every drawing, a yearly pension of four thousand francs for us both and the chief offices of the lottery. His share was a much larger one than mine, but I was not jealous, as I knew he had a greater claim than I. I sold five of the six offices that had been allotted to me for two thousand francs each and opened the sixth with great style in the Rue St.-Denis, putting my valet there as a clerk. He was a bright young Italian, who had been valet to the Prince de la Catolica, the ambassador from Naples.

The day for the first drawing was fixed, and notice was given that the winning numbers would be paid in a week from the time of drawing at the chief office.

With the idea of drawing custom to my office, I gave notice that all winning tickets bearing my signature would be paid at my office in twenty-four hours after the drawing. This drew crowds to my office and considerably increased my profits, as I had six per cent on the receipts. A number of the clerks in the other offices were foolish enough to complain to Calsabigi that I had spoilt their gains, but he sent them about their business, telling them that, to get the better of me, they had only to do as I did—if they had the money.

My first taking amounted to forty thousand francs. An hour after the drawing, my clerk brought me the numbers and showed me

that we had from seventeen to eighteen thousand francs to pay, for which I gave him the necessary funds.

Without my thinking of it, I thus made the fortune of my clerk, for every winner gave him something, and all this I let him keep for himself.

The total receipts amounted to two millions, and the administration made a profit of six hundred thousand francs, of which Paris alone had contributed a hundred thousand francs. This was well enough for a first attempt.

On the day after the drawing I dined with Calsabigi at M. du Vernai's and had the pleasure of hearing him complain that he had made too much money. Paris had eighteen or twenty *ternes*, and, although they were small, they increased the reputation of the lottery, and it was easy to see that the receipts at the next drawing would be doubled. The mock assaults that were made upon me put me in a good humour, and Calsabigi said that my idea had insured me an income of a hundred thousand francs a year, though it would ruin the other receivers.

"I have played similar strokes myself," said M. du Vernai, "and have mostly succeeded; and, as for the other receivers, they are at perfect liberty to follow M. Casanova's example, and it all tends to increase the repute of an institution which we owe to him and to you."

At the second drawing a *terne* of forty thousand francs obliged me to borrow money. My receipts amounted to sixty thousand, but, being obliged to deliver over my chest on the evening before the drawing, I had to pay out of my own funds and was not repaid for a week.

In all the great houses I went to and at the theatres, as soon as I was seen, everybody gave me money, asking me to lay it out as I liked and send them the tickets, as, so far, the lottery was strange to most people. I thus got into the way of carrying about me tickets of all sorts, or rather of all prices, which I gave to people to choose from, going home in the evening with my pockets full of gold. This was an immense advantage to me, a kind of privilege which I enjoyed to the exclusion of the other receivers, who were not in society and did not drive a carriage like myself—no small point in one's favour in a large town, where men are judged by the state they keep. I found I was thus able to go into any society and get credit anywhere.

I had hardly been a month in Paris when my brother François, with whom I had parted in 1752, arrived from Dresden with Madame Silvestre. He had been at Dresden for four years, taken up with the pursuit of his art, having copied all the battle pieces in the Elector's Gallery. We were both of us glad to meet once more, but, on my offering to see what my great friends could do for him with the Academicians, he replied with all an artist's pride that he was much obliged to me but would rather not have any other patrons than his talents. "The French," said he, "rejected me once, and I am far from bearing them ill will on that account, for I would reject myself now if I were

what I was then; but with their love of genius I reckon on a better reception this time."

His confidence pleased me, and I complimented him upon it, for I have always been of the opinion that true merit begins by doing justice to itself.

François painted a fine picture, which, on being exhibited at the Louvre, was received with applause. The Academy bought the picture for twelve thousand francs, my brother became famous and in twenty-six years made almost a million of money, but, in spite of that, foolish expenditure, his luxurious style of living and two bad marriages were the ruin of him.

CHAPTER 56

IN the beginning of March, 1757, I received a letter from my friend, Madame Manzoni, which she sent me by a young man of good appearance, with a frank and high-born air, whom I recognised as a Venetian by his accent. He was young Count Tiretta de Treviso, recommended to my care by Madame Manzoni, who said he would tell me his story, which I might be sure would be a true one. The kind woman sent me by him a small box in which she told me I should find all my manuscripts, as she did not think she would ever see me again.

I gave Tiretta the heartiest of welcomes, telling him that he could not have found a better way to my favour than through a woman to whom I was under the greatest obligations.

"And now, that you may be at your ease with me, I should like to know in what manner I can be of service to you?"

"I have need of your friendship, perhaps of your purse, but at any rate of your protection."

"You have my friendship and my protection already, and my purse is at your service."

After expressing his gratitude to me, Tiretta said:

"A year ago the Supreme Council of my country entrusted me with an employment dangerous to one of my years. I was made, with some other young gentlemen of my own age, a keeper of the Mont de Piété. The pleasures of the carnival having put us to a good deal of expense, we were short of money and borrowed from the till, hoping to be able to make up the money before balancing-day, but hoping all in vain.

"The fathers of my two companions, richer than mine, paid the sums they had taken, and I, not being able to pay, took the part of escaping by flight from the shame and punishment I should have undergone.

"Madame Manzoni advised me to throw myself on your mercy, and she gave me a little box which you shall have to-day. I got to Paris only yesterday and have only two louis, a little linen and the clothes on my back. I am twenty-five, have an iron constitution and a determination to do all in my power to make an honest living, but I

can do nothing. I have not cultivated any one talent in a manner to make use of it now. I can play the flute, but only as an amateur. I know only my own language and have no taste for literature. So what can you make of me? I must add that I have not a single expectation, least of all from my father, for, to save the honour of the family, he will be obliged to sell my portion of the estate, to which I shall have to bid an eternal farewell."

If the count's story had surprised me, the simplicity with which he told it had given me pleasure; and I was resolved to do honour to Madame Manzoni's introduction, feeling that it was my duty to serve a fellow countryman, who was really guilty of nothing worse than gross thoughtlessness.

"Begin," said I, "by bringing your small belongings to the room next to mine and get your meals there. I will pay for everything while I am looking out for something which may do for you."

"We will talk of business to-morrow, for, as I never dine here, I rarely if ever come home till late, and I do not expect to have the honour of seeing you again to-day. Leave me for the present, as I have some work to do; and, if you go out to walk, beware of bad company, and, whatever you do, keep your own counsel. You are fond of gaming, I suppose?"

"I hate it, as it has been the cause of half my troubles."

"And the other half, I'll wager, were caused by women."

"You have guessed aright—oh, those women!"

"Well, don't be angry with them but make them pay for the ill they have done you."

"I will with the greatest pleasure if I can."

"If you are not too particular in your goods, you will find Paris rich in such commodities."

"What do you mean by 'particular'? I would never be a prince's pathic."

"No, no, I was not thinking of that. I mean by 'particular' a man who cannot be affectionate unless he is in love. The man who . . ."

"I see what you mean, and I can lay no claim to such a character. Any hag with golden eyes will always find me as affectionate as a Celadon."

"Well said! I shall soon be able to arrange matters for you."

"I hope you will."

"Are you going to the ambassador's?"

"Good God, no! What should I do when I got there? Tell him my story? He might make things unpleasant for me."

"Not without your going to see him, but I expect he is not concerning himself with your case."

"That's all I ask of him."

"Everybody, my dear count, is in mourning in Paris, so go to my tailor's and get yourself a black suit. Tell him you come from me and say you want it by to-morrow. Goodbye."

I went out soon after, and did not come back till midnight. I

found the box which Madame Manzoni had sent me in my room and in it my manuscripts and my beloved portraits, for I never pawned a snuffbox without taking the portrait out.

The next day Tiretta made his appearance all in black and thanked me for his transformation.

"They are quick, you see, in Paris. It would have taken a week at Treviso."

"Treviso, my dear fellow, is not Paris."

As I said this, the Abbé de la Coste was announced. I did not know the name but gave orders for him to be admitted, and there presently appeared the same little priest with whom I had dined at Versailles after leaving the Abbé de la Ville.

After the customary greetings he began by complimenting me on the success of my lottery and then remarked that he had heard that I had distributed more than six thousand francs' worth of tickets.

"Yes," I said, "and I have tickets left for several thousands more."

"Very good; then I will take a thousand crowns' worth."

"Whenever you please. If you call at my office, you can choose the numbers."

"No, I don't think I'll trouble to do so; give me any numbers just as they come."

"Very good; here is the list you can choose from."

He chose numbers to the amount of three thousand francs and then asked me for a piece of paper to write a promissory note.

"Why so? I can't do business that way, as I dispose of my tickets only for cash."

"But you may be certain you will have the money by to-morrow."

"I am quite sure I should, but you ought to be certain that you will have the tickets to-morrow. They are registered at my office, and I can dispose of them in no other manner."

"Give me some which are not registered."

"Impossible; I could not do it."

"Why not?"

"Because, if they proved to be winning numbers I should have to pay out of my own pocket, an honour I do not desire."

"Well, I think you might run the risk."

"I think not, without being a rogue."

The abbé, who saw he could get nothing out of me, turned to Tiretta and began to speak to him in bad Italian and at last offered to introduce him to Madame de Lambertini, the widow of one of the Pope's nephews. Her name, her relationship to the Pope and the abbé's spontaneous offer made me curious to know more, so I said that my friend would accept his offer and that I would have the honour to be of the party; whereupon we set out.

We got down at the door of the supposed niece of the Holy Father in the Rue Christine and proceeded to go upstairs. We saw a woman who, despite her youthful air, was, I am sure, not a day under forty. She was rather thin, had fine black eyes, a good complexion, lively

but giddy manners, was a great laugh and still capable of exciting a passing fancy. I soon made myself at home with her and found out, when she began to talk, that she was neither a widow nor the niece of the Pope. She came from Modena and was a mere adventuress. This discovery showed me what sort of a man the abbé was.

I thought from his expression that the count had taken a fancy to her, and, when she asked us to dinner, I refused on the plea of an engagement; but Tiretta, who took my meaning, accepted. Soon after I went away with the abbé, whom I dropped at the Quai de la Ferraille, and I then went to beg a dinner at Calsabigi's.

After dinner Calsabigi took me on one side and told me that M. du Vernai had commissioned him to warn me that I could not dispose of tickets on account.

"Does M. du Vernai take me for a fool or a knave? As I am neither, I shall complain to M. de Boulogne."

"You will make a mistake; he merely wanted to warn you and not offend you."

"You offend me very much yourself, sir, in talking to me in that fashion, and you may make up your mind that no one shall talk to me thus a second time."

Calsabigi did all in his power to quiet me down and at last persuaded me to go with him to M. du Vernai's. The worthy old gentleman, seeing the rage I was in, apologised to me for what he had said and told me that a certain Abbé de la Coste had informed him that I did so. At this I was highly indignant, and I told him what had happened that morning, which showed M. du Vernai what kind of a man the abbé was. I never saw him again, either because he got wind of my discovery or because a happy chance kept him out of my way; but I heard, three years after that he had been condemned to the hulks for selling tickets of a Trévaux lottery which was non-existent, and in the hulks he died.

Next day Tiretta came in and said he had only just returned.

"You have been sleeping out, have you, master profligate?"

"Yes, I was so charmed with the she-pope that I kept her company all the night."

"You were not afraid of being in the way?"

"On the contrary, I think she was thoroughly satisfied with my conversation."

"As far as I can see, you had to bring into play all your powers of eloquence."

"She was so well pleased with my fluency that she has begged me to accept a room in her house and allow her to introduce me as a cousin to M. Le Noir, who, I suppose, is her lover."

"You will be a trio, then; and how do you think you will get on together?"

"That's her business. She says this gentleman will give me a good situation in the Inland Revenue."

"Did you accept her offer?"

"I did not refuse it, but I told her I could do nothing without your advice. She entreated me to get you to come to dinner with her on Sunday."

"I shall be happy to go."

I went with my friend, and, as soon as the harebrain saw us, she fell on Tiretta's neck, calling him "dear Count Sixtimes"—a name which stuck to him all the time he was in Paris.

"What has gained my friend so fine a title, madame?"

"His erotic achievements. He is lord of a fief little known in France, of which I am desirous of being the lady."

"I commend you for so noble an ambition."

After telling me of his feats with a freedom which showed her exemption from vulgar prejudice, she informed me that she wished her "cousin" to live in the same house and had already obtained M. Le Noir's permission, which was freely given.

"M. Le Noir," added the fair Lambertini, "will drop in after dinner, and I am dying to introduce 'Count Sixtimes' to him."

After dinner she kept on speaking of the mighty deeds of my countryman and stirred him up, until he, no doubt pleased to have a witness to his exploits, reduced her to silence. I confess that I witnessed the scene without excitement, but, as I could not help seeing the count's athletic build, I concluded that he might fare well everywhere with the ladies.

About three o'clock two elderly women arrived, to whom the Lambertini eagerly introduced "Count Sixtimes." In great astonishment they inquired the origin of his title, and, the heroine of the story having whispered it to them, my friend became an object of interest.

"I can't believe it," said one of these ladies, ogling the count, while his glances seemed to say, "Let us put it to the test, ladies!"

Shortly after a coach stopped at the door, and a fat woman of middle-age appearance and a very pretty girl were ushered in; after them came a pale man in a black suit and a long wig. After greeting them in a manner which implied intimacy, the Pope's niece introduced her cousin "Count Sixtimes." The elderly woman seemed to be astonished at such a name, but the Lambertini gave no explanation. Nevertheless, people seemed to think it rather curious that a man who did not know a word of French should be living in Paris and that, in spite of his ignorance, he continued to jabber away in an easy manner, though nobody could understand what he was talking about.

After some foolish conversation, the Pope's niece proposed a game of loo. She asked me to play but, on my refusing, did not make a point of it but insisted on her cousin being her partner.

"He knows nothing about cards," said she, "but that's no matter, he will learn; and I will undertake to instruct him."

As the young girl, whose beauty had struck me, did not understand the game, I offered her a seat by the fire, asking her to grant me the honour of keeping her company, whereupon the elderly woman who had brought her began to laugh and said I would have some difficulty

in getting her niece to talk about anything, adding in a polite manner that she hoped I would be lenient with her, as she had only just left a convent. I assured her that I should have no difficulty in amusing myself with one so amiable, and, the game having begun, I took up my position near the pretty niece.

I had been near her for several minutes and solely occupied in mute admiration of her beauty when she asked me who was that handsome gentleman who talked so oddly.

"He is a nobleman and a fellow countryman of mine, whom an affair of honour has banished from his country."

"He speaks a curious dialect."

"Yes, but the fact is that French is very little spoken in Italy; he will soon pick it up in Paris, and then he will be laughed at no longer. I am sorry to have brought him here, for in less than twenty-four hours he was spoiled."

"How spoiled?"

"I daren't tell you, as perhaps your aunt would not like it."

"I don't think I should tell her, but perhaps I should not have asked."

"Oh, yes, you should, and, as you wish to know, I will make no mystery of it. Madame Lambertini took a fancy to him, they passed the night together, and, in token of the satisfaction he gave her, she has given him the ridiculous nickname of 'Count Sixtimes.' That's all. I am vexed about it, as my friend was no profligate."

Astonishment—and very reasonable astonishment—will be expressed that I dared to talk in this way to a girl fresh from a convent; but I should have been astonished myself at the bare idea of any respectable girl coming to Lambertini's house. I fixed my gaze on my fair companion and saw the blush of shame mounting over her pretty face, but I thought that might have more than one meaning.

Judge of my surprise when two minutes afterwards I heard this question, "But what has the name 'Sixtimes' got to do with sleeping with Madame Lambertini?"

"My dear young lady, the explanation is perfectly simple: . . ."

"And you think me silly enough to tell my aunt of what we have been talking? Don't believe it."

"But there's another thing I am sorry about."

"You shall tell me what that is directly."

The reason which obliged the charming niece to retire for a few minutes may be guessed without our going into explanations. When she came back she went behind her aunt's chair, her eyes fixed on Tiretta, and then she came up to me and, taking her seat again, said, "Now, what else is it that you are sorry about?" Her eyes sparkled as she asked the question.

"May I tell you, do you think?"

"You have said so much already that I don't think you need have any scruples about telling me the rest."

"Very good; you must know, then, that this very day and in my presence he took her."

"If that displeased you, you must be jealous."

"Possibly, but the fact is that I was humbled by a circumstance I dare not tell you."

"I think you are laughing at me with your 'dare not tell you.'"

"God forbid, mademoiselle! I will confess, then, that I was humbled because Madame Lambertini made me see that my friend was two inches taller than I."

"Then she imposed on you, for you are taller than your friend."

"..."

"I would not have thought it of you, for, when I came into the room, I thought you looked a well-proportioned man, but, if you are not, I am sorry for you."

At this she began to perspire violently and went behind her aunt's chair. I did not stir, as I was sure she would soon come back, putting her down in my own mind as very far removed from silliness—or innocence, either. I supposed she wished to affect what she did not possess. I was, moreover, delighted at having taken the opportunity so well. I had punished her for having tried to impose on me; and, as I had taken a great fancy to her, I was pleased that she seemed to like her punishment. As for her possessing wit, there could be no doubt on that point, for it was she who had sustained the chief part in our dialogue, and my sayings and doings were all prompted by her questions and the persevering way in which she kept to the subject.

She had not been behind her aunt's chair five minutes when the latter was loosed. She, not knowing whom to attack, turned on her niece and said, "Get you gone, little silly, you are bringing me bad luck! Besides, it is bad manners to leave the gentleman all by himself when he so kindly offered to keep you company."

The amiable niece made no answer and came back to me smiling. "It my aunt knew," said she, "what you did to me, she would not have accused me of bad manners."

"I can't tell you how sorry I am. I want you to have some evidence of my repentance, but all I can do is to go. Will you be offended if I do?"

"If you leave me, my aunt will call me a dreadful stupid and will say that I have tired you out."

"Would you like me to stay, then?"

"You can't go."

"Had you no idea of what I was talking about a little while ago?"

"My ideas on the subject were inaccurate. My aunt took me out of the convent only a month ago, and I had been there since I was seven."

"How old are you now?"

"Seventeen. They tried to make me take the veil, but, not having any relish for the fooleries of the cloister, I refused."

"Are you vexed with me?"

"I ought to be very angry with you, but I know it was my fault, so I will only ask you to be discreet."

"Don't be afraid; if I were indiscreet, I should be the first to suffer."

"You have given me a lesson which will come in useful. Stop! stop! or I will go away."

" . . . "

"I see you are an excellent master," she said. "Your pupils make rapid progress, and you give your lessons with such a learned air."

"Now don't be angry with me for what has happened. I should never have dared to go so far if your beauty had not inspired me."

"Am I to take that speech as a declaration of love?"

"Yes, it is bold, sweetheart, but it is sincere. If it were not, I should be unworthy both of you and of myself."

"Can I believe you?"

"Yes, with all your heart. But tell me if I may hope for your love?"

"I don't know. All I know at present is that I ought to hate you, for in the space of a quarter of an hour you have taught me what I thought I should never know till I was married."

"Are you sorry?"

"I ought to be, although I feel that I have nothing more to learn on a matter which I never dared to think about. But how is it that you have become so calm?"

"Because we are talking reasonably, and after this rapture love requires some repose."

" . . . "

" . . . "

" . . . "

" . . . "

" . . . "

"I see our fire is going out."

With these words she took up a stick to poke the fire and stooped down in a favourable position. She got up in a dignified way and told me in a polite and feeling manner that she was a well born girl and worthy of respect. Pretending to be embarrassed, I made a thousand excuses and soon saw the amiable expression return to the face which it became so well. I said that, in spite of my repentance, I was glad to know that she had never made another man happy.

"Believe me," she said, "if I make anyone happy, it will be my husband to whom I have given my hand and heart."

I took her hand, which she abandoned to my rapturous kisses. I had reached this pleasant stage in the proceedings when M. Le Noir was announced, he having come to inquire what the Pope's niece had to say to him.

M. Le Noir, a man of a certain age and simple appearance, begged the company to remain seated. The Lambertini introduced me to him, and he asked if I were the artist; but, on being informed that I was his elder brother, he congratulated me on my lottery and the esteem in which M. du Vernai held me. But what interested him most was the

cousin, whom the fair niece of the Pope introduced to him under his real name of Tiretta, thinking doubtless that his new title would not carry much weight with M. Le Noir. Taking up the discourse, I told him that the count was commended to me by a lady whom I greatly esteemed and that he had been obliged to leave his country for the present on account of an affair of honour. The Lambertini added that she wished to give him lodging but had not liked to do so till she had consulted M. Le Noir. "Madame," said the worthy man, "you have sovereign power in your own house, and I shall be delighted to see the count in your society."

As M. Le Noir spoke Italian very well, Tiretta left the table, and we sat down all four of us by the fire, where my fresh conquest had an opportunity of showing her wit. M. Le Noir was a man of much intelligence and great experience. He made her talk of the convent where she had been, and, as soon as he knew her name, he began to speak of her father, with whom he had been well acquainted. He was a councillor of the Parliament of Rouen and had enjoyed a great reputation during his lifetime. My sweetheart was above the ordinary height, her hair was a fine golden colour, and her regular features, despite the brilliance of her eyes, expressed candour and modesty. Her dress allowed me to follow all the lines of her figure, and one's eyes dwelt pleasantly on the beauty of her form and the two spheres which seemed to lament their too close confinement. Although M. Le Noir said nothing of all this, it was easy to see that in his own way he admired her perfections no less than I. He left us at eight o'clock, and half an hour afterwards the fat aunt went away, followed by her charming niece and the pale man who had come with them. I lost no time in taking leave with Tiretta, who promised the Pope's niece to join her on the morrow, which he did.

Three or four days later I received at my office a letter from Mlle. de la Meure, the pretty niece. It ran as follows:

"Madame X—, my aunt, my late mother's sister, is a devotee, fond of gaming, rich, stingy and unjust. She does not like me and, not having succeeded in persuading me to take the veil, wants to marry me to a wealthy Dunkirk merchant whom I do not know, but (mark this) she does not know him any more than I do. The matrimonial agent has praised him very much, and very naturally, since a man must praise his own goods. This gentleman is satisfied with an income of twelve hundred francs per annum, but he promises to leave me in his will no less than a hundred and fifty thousand francs. You should know that, by my mother's will, my aunt is obliged to pay me on my wedding day twenty-five thousand crowns.

"If what has taken place between us has not made me contemptible in your sight, I offer you my hand and heart with sixty-five thousand francs and as much more on my aunt's death.

"Don't send me any answer, as I don't know how or by whom to receive your letter. You can answer me in your own person next Sunday at Madame Lambertini's. You will thus have four days wherein to

consider this most important question. I do not exactly know whether I love you, but I am quite sure that I prefer you to any other man. I know that each of us has still to gain the other's esteem, but I am sure you would make my life a happy one and that I should be a faithful wife. If you think the happiness I seek can add to your own, I must warn you that you will need the aid of a lawyer, as my aunt is miserly and will stick at trifles.

"If you decide in the affirmative, you must find a convent for me to take refuge in before I commit myself to anything, as otherwise I should be exposed to the harsh treatment I wish to avoid. If, on the other hand, my proposal does not meet your views, I have one favour to ask, by granting which you will earn my everlasting gratitude. This is that you will endeavour to see me no more and will take care not to be present in any company in which you think I am to be found. Thus you will help me to forget you, and this is the least you can do for me. You may guess that I shall never be happy till I have become your wife or have forgotten you. Farewell! I reckon upon seeing you on Sunday."

This letter affected me. I felt that it was dictated by prudent, virtuous and honourable feelings, and I found even more merit in the intellectual endowments of the girl than in her beauty. I blushed at having in a manner led her astray, and I should have thought myself worthy of punishment if I had been capable of refusing the hand offered to me with so much nobility of feeling. And a second, but still a powerful, consideration made me look complacently upon a fortune larger than I could reasonably expect to win. Nevertheless, the idea of the marriage state, for which I felt I had no vocation, made me tremble.

I knew myself too well not to be aware that, as a married man, I should be unhappy and consequently, with the best intentions, would fail in making the woman's life a happy one. My uncertainty in the four days which she had wisely left me convinced me that I was not in love with her. In spite of that, so weak was I that I could not summon up courage to reject her offer—still less to tell her so frankly, which would have made her esteem me.

During these four days I was entirely absorbed in this one subject. I bitterly repented of having outraged her modesty, for I now esteemed and respected her, but yet I could not make up my mind to repair the wrong I had done her. I could not bear to incur her dislike, but the idea of tying myself down was dreadful to me, and such is the condition of a man who has to choose between two alternatives and cannot make up his mind.

Fearing lest my evil genius should take me to the opera or elsewhere and in spite of myself make me miss my appointment, I resolved to dine with the Lambertini, without having come to any decision. The pious niece of the Pope was at mass when I reached her house. I found Tiretta engaged in playing the flute, but, as soon as he saw me, he dropped the instrument, ran up to me, embraced me and gave me back the money his suit had cost me.

"I see you are in cash, old fellow; I congratulate you."

"It's a grievous piece of luck to me, for the money is stolen, and I am sorry I have got it, though I was an accomplice in the theft."

"What! the money is stolen?"

"Yes, sharpening is done here, and I have been taught to help I share in their ill-gotten gains because I have not the strength of mind to refuse. My landlady and two or three women of the same sort pluck the pigeons. The business does not suit me, and I am thinking of leaving it. Sooner or later I shall kill or be killed, and either event will be the death of me, so I am thinking of leaving this cut-throat place as soon as possible."

"I advise you—nay, I bid you—do so by all means, and I should think you had better be gone to-day than to-morrow."

"I don't want to do anything suddenly, as M. Le Noir is a gentleman and my friend, and he thinks me a cousin to this wretched woman. As he knows nothing of the infamous trade she carries on, he would suspect something and perhaps would leave her after learning the reason of my departure. I shall find some excuse or other in the course of the next five or six days, and then I will make haste and return to you."

The Lambertini thanked me for coming to dinner in an informal manner and told me we should have the company of Mlle. de la Meure and her aunt. I asked her if she was still satisfied with my friend "Six-times," and she told me that, though the count did not always reside on his manor, she was for all that delighted with him; "and," said she, "I am too good a monarch to ask too much of my vassals."

I congratulated her, and we continued to jest till the arrival of the two other guests.

As soon as Mlle. de la Meure saw me, she could scarcely conceal her pleasure. She was in half-mourning and looked so pretty in this costume, which set off the whiteness of her skin, that I still wonder why that instant did not determine my fate.

Tiretta, who had been making his toilette, rejoined us, and, as nothing prevented me from showing the liking I had taken for the amiable girl, I paid her all possible attention. I told the aunt that I found her niece so pretty that I would renounce my bachelorhood if I could find such a mate.

"My niece is a virtuous and sweet-tempered girl, sir, but she is utterly devoid of either intelligence or piety."

"Never mind the intelligence," said the niece, "but I was never found wanting in piety at the convent."

"I dare say the nuns are of the Jesuitical party."

"What has that got to do with it, aunt?"

"Very much, child; the Jesuits and their adherents are well known to have no vital religion. But let us talk of something else. All that I want you to do is to know how to please your future husband."

"Is mademoiselle about to marry, then?"

"Her intended will probably arrive at the beginning of next month."

"Is he a lawyer?"

"No, sir; he is a well-to-do merchant."

"M. Le Noir told me that your niece was the daughter of a councillor, and I did not imagine you would sanction her marrying beneath her."

"There will be no question of such a thing in this instance, sir; and, after all, what is 'marrying beneath one'? My niece's intended is an honest and therefore a noble man, and I am sure it will be her fault if she does not lead a life of perfect happiness with him."

"Quite so, supposing she loves him."

"Oh! love and all that kind of thing will come in good time, you know."

As these remarks could only give pain to the young lady, who was listening in silence, I changed the conversation to the enormous crowd which would be present at the execution of Damien, and, finding them extremely desirous of witnessing this horrible sight, I offered them a large window with an excellent view. The ladies accepted with great pleasure, and I promised to escort them in good time.

I had no such thing as a window, but I knew that in Paris, as everywhere, money will procure anything. After dinner I went out on the plea of business, and, taking the first coach I came across, in a quarter of an hour I succeeded in renting a first-floor window in excellent position for three louis. I paid in advance, taking care to get a receipt.

My business over, I hastened to rejoin the company and found them engaged in piquet. Mlle. de la Meure, who knew nothing about it, was tired of looking on. I came up to her, and, having something to say, we went to the other end of the room.

"Your letter, dearest, has made me the happiest of men. You have displayed in it such intelligence and such admirable characteristics as would win you the fervent adoration of every man of good sense."

"I want only one man's love. I will be content with the esteem of the rest."

"My angel, I will make you my wife, and I shall bless till my last breath the lucky audacity to which I owe my being chosen before other men who would not have refused your hand, even without the fifty thousand crowns, which are nothing in comparison with your beauty and your wit."

"I am very glad you like me so much."

"Could I do otherwise? And now that you know my heart, do nothing hastily but trust in me."

"You will not forget how I am placed?"

"I will bear it in mind. Let me have time to take a house, furnish it and put myself in a position in which I shall be worthy of your hand. You must remember that I am only in furnished apartments, that you are well connected and that I should not like to be regarded as a fortune-hunter."

"You know that my intended husband will soon arrive?"

"Yes, I will take care of that."

"When he does come, you know, matters will be pushed on rapidly."

"Not too rapidly for me to be able to set you free in twenty-four hours and without letting your aunt know that the blow comes from me. You may rest assured, dearest, that the Minister for Foreign Affairs, on being assured that you wish to marry me, and me only, will get you an inviolable asylum in the best convent in Paris. He will also retain counsel on your behalf, and, if your mother's will is properly drawn up, your aunt will soon be obliged to hand over your dowry and give security for the rest of the property. Do not trouble yourself about the matter, but let the Dunkirk merchant come when he likes. At all hazards you may reckon upon me, and you may be sure you will not be in your aunt's house on the day fixed for the wedding."

"I confide in you entirely, but for goodness' sake say no more on a circumstance which wounds my sense of modesty. You said that I offered you marriage because you took liberties with me?"

"Was I wrong?"

"Yes, partly, at all events; and you ought to know that, if I had not good reasons, I should have done a very foolish thing in offering to marry you, but I may as well tell you that, liberties or no liberties, I should always have liked you better than anyone."

I was beside myself with joy and, seizing her hand, covered it with tender and respectful kisses; and I feel certain that, if a notary and priest had been then and there available, I should have married her without the smallest hesitation.

Full of each other, like all lovers, we paid no attention to the horrible racket that was going on at the other end of the room. At last I thought it my duty to see what was happening, and, leaving my intended, I rejoined the company to quiet Tiretta.

I saw on the table a casket, its lid open and full of all sorts of jewels; close by were two men who were disputing with Tiretta, who held a book in one hand. I saw at once that they were talking about a lottery, but why were they disputing? Tiretta told me they were a pair of knaves who had won thirty or forty louis of him by means of the book, which he handed to me.

"Sir," said one of the gamesters, "this book treats of a lottery in which all the calculations are made in the fairest manner possible. It contains twelve hundred leaves, two hundred being winning leaves, while the rest are blanks. Anyone who wants to play has only to pay a crown and then to put a pin's point at random between two leaves of the closed book. The book is then opened at the place where the pin is, and, if the leaf is blank, the player loses; but if, on the other hand, the leaf bears a number, he is given the corresponding ticket and an article of the value indicated on the ticket is then handed to him. Please to observe, sir, that the lowest prize is twelve francs, and there are some numbers worth as much as six hundred francs, and even one to the value of twelve hundred. We have been playing for an hour and have lost several costly articles, and madame," pointing to my sweet-

heart's aunt, "won a ring worth six louis, but, as she preferred cash, she continued playing and lost the money she had gained."

"Yes," said the aunt, "and these gentlemen have won everybody's money with their accursed game—which proves it is all a mere cheat."

"It proves they are rogues," said Tiretta.

"But, gentlemen," answered one of them, "in that case the receivers of the government lottery are rogues too." Whereon Tiretta gave him a box on the ear, I threw myself between the two combatants and told them not to speak a word.

"All lotteries," said I, "are advantageous to the holders, but the King is at the head of the government lottery, and I am the principal receiver, in which character I shall proceed to confiscate this casket and give you the choice of the following alternative: You can, if you like, return to the persons present the money you have unlawfully won from them, whereon I will let you go with your box. If you refuse to do so, I shall send for a policeman, who will take you to prison, and tomorrow you will be tried by M. Berier, to whom I shall take this book in the morning. We shall soon see whether we are rogues as well as they."

Seeing that they had to do with a man of determination and that resistance would only result in their losing all, they resolved with as good a grace as they could muster to return all their winnings, and for all I know double the sum, for they were forced to return forty louis, though they swore they had won only twenty. The company was too select for me to venture to decide between them. In point of fact, I was rather inclined to believe the rascals, but I was angry with them and wanted them to pay a good price for having made a comparison, quite right in the main, but odious to me in the extreme. The same reason, doubtless, prevented me from giving them back their book, which I had no earthly right to keep and which they asked me in vain to return to them. My firmness and my threats, and perhaps also the fear of the police, made them think themselves lucky to get off with their jewel-box. As soon as they were gone, the ladies, like the kindly creatures they were, began to pity them. "You might have given them back their book," they said to me.

"And you, ladies, might have let them keep their money."

"But they cheated us of it."

"Did they? Well, their cheating was done with the book, and I have done them a kindness by taking it from them."

They felt the force of my remarks, and the conversation took another turn.

Early next morning the two gamesters paid me a visit, bringing with them as a bribe a beautiful casket containing twenty-four lovely pieces of Dresden china. I found this argument irresistible and felt obliged to return them the book, threatening them at the same time with imprisonment if they dared to carry on their business in Paris in future. They promised me to abstain from doing so—no doubt with a mental reservation, but I cared nothing about that.

I resolved to offer this beautiful gift to Mlle. de la Meure, and I took it to her the same day. I had a hearty welcome, and the aunt loaded me with thanks.

On March the twenty-eighth, the day of Damien's martyrdom, I went to fetch the ladies in good time; and, as the carriage would scarcely hold us all, no objection was made to my taking my sweetheart on my knee, and in this order we reached the Place de Grève. The three ladies, packing themselves together as tightly as possible, took up their positions at the window, leaning forward on their elbows, so as to prevent us seeing from behind. The window had two steps to it, and they stood on the second; and in order to see we had to stand on the same step, for, if we had stood on the first, we should not have been able to see over their heads. I have my reasons for giving these minutiae, as otherwise the reader would have some difficulty in guessing at the details which I am obliged to pass over in silence.

We had the courage to watch the dreadful sight for four hours. The circumstances of Damien's execution are too well known to render it necessary for me to speak of them; indeed, the account would be too long a one, and in my opinion such horrors are an offence to our common humanity.

Damien was a fanatic who, with the idea of doing a good work and obtaining a heavenly reward, had tried to assassinate Louis XV; and, though the attempt was a failure, and he gave the King only a slight wound, he was torn to pieces as if the crime had been consummated.

While this victim of the Jesuits was being executed, I was several times obliged to turn away my face and stop my ears as I heard his piercing shrieks, half of his body having been torn from him, but the Lambertini and the fat aunt did not budge an inch. Was it because their hearts were hardened? They told me, and I pretended to believe them, that their horror at the wretch's wickedness prevented them feeling that compassion which his unheard-of torments should have excited. The fact was that Tiretta kept the pious aunt curiously engaged during the whole time of the execution, and this, perhaps, was what prevented the virtuous lady from moving or even turning her head round.

Finding himself behind her, he had taken the precaution to lift up her dress to avoid treading on it. That, no doubt, was according to the rule; but soon after, on giving an involuntary glance in their direction, I found that Tiretta had carried his precautions rather far, and, not wishing to interrupt my friend or make the lady feel ill at ease, I turned my head and stood in such a way that my sweetheart could see nothing of what was going on; this put the good lady at her ease. For two hours after I heard a continuous rustling, and, relishing the joke, I kept quiet the whole time. I admired Tiretta's hearty appetite still more than his courage, but what pleased me most was the touching resignation with which the pious aunt bore it all.

At the end of this long session I saw Madame X— turn round, and, doing the same, I fixed my gaze on Tiretta and found him looking as fresh and cool as if nothing had happened, but the aunt seemed to me

to have a rather pensive appearance. She had been under the fatal necessity of keeping quiet and letting Tiretta do what he liked, for fear of the Lambertini's jests and lest her niece might be scandalised by the revelation of mysteries of which she was supposed to know nothing.

We set out, and, having dropped the Pope's niece at her door, I begged her to lend me Tiretta for a few hours, and I then took Madame X— to her house in the Rue St. André-des-Arts. She asked me to come and see her the following day, as she had something to tell me, and I remarked that she took no notice of my friend as she left us. We went to the Hôtel de Russie, where they gave you an excellent dinner for six francs a head, and I thought my mad friend stood in need of recruiting his strength.

"What were you doing behind Madame X—?" said I.

"I am sure you saw nothing, or anybody else either."

"No, because, when I saw the beginning of your manœuvres and guessed what was coming, I stood in such a way that neither the Lambertini nor the pretty niece could see you. I can guess what your goal was, and I must say I admire your hearty appetite. But your wretched victim appears to be rather angry."

"Oh! my dear fellow, that's all the affectation of an old maid. She may pretend to be put out, but, as she kept quiet the whole time, I am certain she would be glad to begin all over again."

"I think so, too, in her heart of hearts; but her pride might suggest that you had been lacking in respect, and the suggestion would be by no means groundless."

"'Respect,' you say? But must one not always be lacking in respect to women when one wants to come to the point?"

"Quite so, but there's a distinction between what lovers may do when they are together and what is proper in the presence of a mixed company."

"Yes, but I snatched distinct favours from her, without the least opposition; had I not therefore good reasons for taking her consent for granted?"

"You reason well, but you see she is out of humour with you. She wants to speak to me to-morrow, and I have no doubt you will be the subject of our conversation."

"Possibly, but still I should think she would not speak to you of the comic piece of business; it would be very silly of her."

"Why so? You don't know these pious women. They are brought up by Jesuits, who often give them some good lessons on the subject, and they are delighted to confess to a third party; and these confessions with a seasoning of tears give them in their own eyes quite a halo of saintliness."

"Well, let her tell you if she likes. We shall see what comes of it."

"Possibly she may demand satisfaction; in which case I shall be glad to do my best for her."

"You make me laugh! I can't imagine what sort of satisfaction she

could claim, unless she wants to punish me by the *lex talionis*, which would be hardly practicable without a repetition of the original offence. If she had not liked the game, all she had to do was to give me a push, which would have sent me backwards."

"Yes, but that would have let us know what you had been trying to do."

"..."

"It's an amusing business altogether. But did you notice that the Lambertini was angry with you, too? She perhaps saw what you were doing and felt hurt."

"Oh! she has another cause of complaint against me. We have fallen out, and I am leaving her this evening."

"Really?"

"Yes, I will tell you all about it. Yesterday evening, a young fellow in the Inland Revenue who had been seduced to sup with us by a hussy of Genoa, after losing forty louis, threw the cards in the face of my landlady and called her a thief. On the impulse of the moment I took a candle and put it out on his face. I might have destroyed one of his eyes, but I fortunately hit him on the cheek. He immediately ran for his sword, mine was ready, and, if the Genoese had not thrown herself between us, murder might have been committed. When the poor wretch saw his cheek in the glass, he became so furious that nothing short of the return of all his money would appease him. They gave it him back, in spite of my advice, for in doing so they admitted, tacitly at all events, that it had been won by cheating. This caused a sharp dispute between the Lambertini and myself after he had gone. She said we should have kept the forty louis, and nothing would have happened but for my interference, that it was she and not I whom the young man had insulted. The Genoese added that, if we had kept cool, we should have had the plucking of him, but that God alone knew what he would do now with the mark of the burn on his face. Tired of the talk of these infamous women, I was about to leave them, but my landlady began to ride the high horse and went so far as to call me a beggar.

"If M. Le Noir had not come in just then, she would have had a bad time of it, as my stick was already in my hand. As soon as they saw him, they told me to hold my tongue, but my blood was up, and, turning towards the worthy man, I told him that his mistress had called me a beggar, that she was a common prostitute, that I was not her cousin nor in any way related to her and that I should leave her that very day. As soon as I had come to the end of this short and swift discourse, I went out and shut myself up in my room. In the course of the next two hours I shall go and fetch my linen, and I hope to breakfast with you to-morrow."

Tiretta had done well. His heart was in the right place, and he was wise not to allow the foolish impulses of youth to plunge him in the sink of corruption. As long as a man has not committed a dishonourable action, as long as his heart is sound, though his head may go astray,

the path of duty is still open to him. I should say the same of women if prejudice were not so strong in their case and if they were not much more under the influence of the heart than the head.

After a good dinner, washed down by some delicious Sillery, we parted, and I spent the evening in writing. Next morning I did some business and at noon went to see the distressed devotee, whom I found at home with her charming niece. We talked a few minutes about the weather, and she then told my sweetheart to leave us, as she wanted to speak to me. I was prepared for what was coming and waited for her to break the silence which all women of her position observe.

"You will be surprised, sir, at what I am going to tell you, for I have determined to bring before you a complaint of an unheard-of character. The case is really of the most delicate nature, and I am impelled to make a confidant of you by the impression you made on me when I first saw you. I consider you to be a man of discretion, of honour, and above all a moral man; in short, I believe you have experienced religion, and, if I am making a mistake, it will be a pity, for, though I have been insulted, I don't lack means of avenging myself, and, as you are his friend, you will be sorry for him."

"Is Tiretta the guilty party, madame?"

"The same."

"And what is his crime?"

"He is a villain; he has insulted me in the most monstrous manner."

"I should not have thought him capable of doing so."

"I daresay not, but then you are a moral man."

"But what was the nature of his offence? You may count on my secrecy."

"I really couldn't tell you, it's quite out of the question; but I trust you will be able to guess it. Yesterday, during the execution of the wretched Damien, he strongly abused the position in which he found himself behind me."

"I see; I understand what you mean; you need say no more. You have cause for anger, and he is to blame for acting in such a manner. But allow me to say that the case is not unexampled or even uncommon, and I think you might make some allowance for the strength of love, the close quarters and above all for the youth and passion of the sinner. Moreover, the offence is one which may be expiated in a number of ways, provided the parties come to an agreement. Tiretta is young and a perfect gentleman, he is handsome and at bottom a good fellow; could not a marriage be arranged?"

I waited for a reply, but, perceiving that the injured party kept silence (a circumstance which seemed to me a good omen), I went on.

"If marriage should not meet your views, we might try a lasting friendship, in which he could show his repentance and prove himself deserving of pardon. Remember, madame, that Tiretta is only a man and therefore subject to all the weaknesses of our poor human nature; and even you have your share of the blame."

"I, sir?"

"Yes, madame, but innocently, for you are not directly to blame that your charms led him astray. Nevertheless, without this incentive the circumstance would never have taken place, and I think you should consider your beauty as a mitigation of the offence."

"You plead your cause well, sir, but I will do you justice and confess that all your remarks have been characterised by much Christian feeling. However, you are reasoning on false premises; you are ignorant of his real crime, yet how should you guess it?"

With this she burst into tears, leading me completely off the scent and leaving me in doubt what to think.

"He can't have stolen her purse," said I to myself, "as I don't think him capable of such an action; if I did, I'd blow his brains out."

The afflicted lady soon dried her tears and went on as follows:

"You are thinking of a deed which one might possibly succeed in reconciling with reason and in making amends for; but the crime of which that brute has been guilty I dare scarcely imagine, as it is almost enough to drive me mad."

"Good heavens! you can't mean it? This is dreadful; do I hear you aright?"

"Yes. You are moved, I see, but such are the circumstances of the case. Pardon my tears, which flow from anger and the shame with which I am covered."

"Yes, and from outraged religion, too."

"Certainly, certainly. That is the chief source of my grief, and I should have mentioned it if I had not feared you were not so strongly attached to religion as myself."

"Nobody, God be praised! could be more strongly attached to religion than I, and nothing can ever unloose the ties which bind me to it."

"You will be grieved, then, to hear that I am destined to suffer eternal punishment, for I must and will be avenged."

"Not so, madame, perish the thought, as I could not become your accomplice in such a design; if you will not abandon it, at least say nothing to me on the subject. I will promise you to tell him nothing, although, as he lives with me, the sacred laws of hospitality oblige me to give him due warning."

"I thought he lived with the Lambertini."

"He left her yesterday. The connection between them was a criminal one, and I have drawn him back from the brink of the precipice."

"You don't mean to say so!"

"Yes, upon my word of honour."

"You astonish one. This is very edifying. I don't wish the young man's death, but you must confess he owes me some reparation."

"He does, indeed. A charming Frenchwoman is not to be handled in the Italian manner without signal amends, but I can think of nothing at all commensurate with the offence. There is only one plan, which I will endeavour to carry out if you will agree to it."

"What is that?"

"I will put the guilty party in your power without his knowing what is to happen, and I will leave you alone, so that you can wreak all your wrath upon him, provided you will allow me, unknown to him, to be in the next room, as I shall regard myself as responsible for his safety."

"I consent. You will stay in this room and he must be left in the other, where I shall receive him, but take care he has no suspicion of your presence."

"He shan't dream of it. He will not even know where I am taking him, for he must not think that I have been informed of his misdoings. As soon as we get there and the conversation becomes general, I shall leave the room, pretending to be going away."

"When will you bring him? I long to cover him with confusion. I will make him tremble. I am curious to hear how he will justify himself for such an offence."

"I can't say, but I think and hope that your presence will make him eloquent, as I should like to see your differences adjusted."

At one o'clock the Abbé des Forges arrived and she made me sit down to dinner with them. This abbé was a pupil of the famous Bishop of Auxerre, who was still living. I talked so well on the subject of grace and made so many quotations from St. Augustine that the abbé and the devotee took me for a zealous Jansenist, a character with which my dress and appearance did not at all correspond. My sweetheart did not give me a single glance while the meal was going on and, thinking she had some motives, I abstained from speaking to her.

After the dinner—which, by the way, was a very good one—I promised the offended lady to bring her the culprit bound hand and foot the next day, after the play was over. To put her at her ease, I said I would come afoot, as I was certain that he would not recognise the house in the dark.

As soon as I saw Tiretta, I began with a serio-comic air to reproach him for the dreadful crime he had committed on the body of a lady in every way virtuous and respectable, but the mad fellow began to laugh and it would have been waste of time for me to try to stop him.

"What!" said he, "she had the courage to tell you all?"

"You don't deny the fact, then?"

"If she says it is so, I don't think I can give her the lie."

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"You will ruin the business if you don't take care; be as long as you can; she will like that best and it will be to your interest. Don't hurry yourself and never mind me, as I am sure to get on all right while you are changing anger into a softer passion. Remember not to know that I am in the house, and, if you stay with her only a short time (which I don't think will be the case), take a coach and be off. You know the least a pious woman like her can do will be to provide me with fire and company. Don't forget that she is well born like yourself.

These women of quality are, no doubt, as immoral as any other women, since they are constructed of the same material, but they like to have their pride flattered by certain attentions. She is rich, a devotee and, what is more, inclined to pleasure; strive to gain her friendship *faciem ad faciem*, as the King of Prussia says. You may, perhaps, make your fortune.

"If she asks you why you left the Pope's niece, take care not to tell her the reason. She will be pleased with your discretion. In short, do your best to expiate the enormity of your offence."

"I have only to speak the truth."

"That's an odd reason, but it may seem convincing to a French-woman."

I need not tell the reader that I gave Tiretta a full account of my conversation with the lady. If any complain of this breach of honour, I must tell them that I had made a mental reservation not to keep my promise, and those who are acquainted with the morality of the children of Ignatius will understand that I was completely at my ease.

Next day we went to the opera and afterwards, our plans made up, we walked to the house of the insulted and virtuous lady. She received us with great dignity, but yet there was an agreeable under-current in her voice and manner which I thought very promising.

"I never take supper," she said, "but, if you had forewarned me of your visit, I should have got something for you."

After telling her all the news I had heard in the theatre, I pretended to be obliged to go and begged her to let me leave the count with her for a few minutes.

"If I am more than a quarter of an hour," said I to the count, "don't wait. Take a coach home and we shall see each other to-morrow."

Instead of going downstairs, I went into the next room and two minutes after who should enter but my sweetheart, who looked charmed and yet puzzled at my appearance.

"I think I must be dreaming," said she, "but my aunt has charged me not to leave you alone and to tell her woman not to come upstairs unless she rings the bell. Your friend is with her, and she told me to speak low, as he is not to know that you are here. What does it all mean?"

"You are curious, are you?"

"I confess I am in this instance, for all this mystery seems designed to excite curiosity."

"Dearest, you shall know all; but how cold it is!"

"My aunt told me to make a good fire; she has become liberal, or rather, lavish, all of a sudden—look at the wax candles!"

"That's a new thing, is it?"

"Oh, quite new."

As soon as we were seated in front of the fire, I began to tell her the story, to which she listened with all the attention a young girl can give to such a matter; but, as I had thought it well to pass over some of the details, she could not properly understand what crime it

was that Tiretta had committed. I was not sorry to be obliged to tell her the story in plain language, and, to give more expression, I employed the language of gesture, which made her blush and laugh at the same time. I then told her that, having taken up the question of the reparation that was due to her aunt, I had so arranged matters that I was certain of being alone with her all the time my friend was engaged. Thereupon I began to cover her pretty face with kisses, and, as I allowed myself no other liberties, she received my caresses as a proof of the greatness of my love and the purity of my feelings.

"Dearest," she said, "what you say puzzles me; there are two things I can't understand. How could Tiretta succeed in committing this crime with my aunt, which I think would be possible only with the consent of the party attacked, but quite impossible without it? This makes me believe that, if the thing was done, it was done with her hearty good will."

"Very true, for, if she did not like it, she had only to change her position."

"Not so much as that."

"There, sweetheart, you are wrong, for the right kind of man will overcome all obstacles."

"I believe I could defy all the Tirettas in the world. There's another thing I don't understand and that is how my blessed aunt came to tell you all about it; for, if she had any sense, she might have known that it would only make you laugh. And what satisfaction does she expect to get from a brute like that, who possibly thinks the affair a matter of no consequence? I should think he would do the same to any woman who occupied the same position as my aunt."

"You are right, for he told me he went into it like a blind man, not knowing where he was going."

"Your friend is a queer fellow, and, if other men are like him, I am sure I should have no feeling but contempt for them."

"She has told me nothing about the satisfaction she is thinking of and which she possibly feels quite sure of attaining, but I think I can guess what it will be—namely, a formal declaration of love; and I suppose he will expiate his crime by becoming her lover and doubtless this will be their wedding night."

"The affair is getting amusing. I can't believe it. My dear aunt is too anxious about her salvation; and how do you imagine the young man can ever fall in love with her—or play the part—with such a face as hers before his eyes? Have you ever seen a countenance as disgusting as my aunt's? Her skin is covered with pimples, her eyes distil humours and her teeth and breath are enough to discourage any man. She's hideous."

"All that is nothing to a young spark of twenty-five; one is always ready for an assault at that age; not like me, who feels myself a man only in the presence of charms like yours, of which I long to be the lawful possessor."

"You will find me the most affectionate of wives, and I feel quite

sure that I shall have your heart in such good keeping that I shall never be afraid of losing it."

We had talked thus pleasantly for an hour and Tiretta was still with the aunt. I thought things pointed towards a reconciliation and judged the matter was getting serious. I told my sweetheart my opinion and asked her to give me something to eat.

"I can give you," said she, "only some bread and cheese, a slice of ham and some wine which my aunt pronounces excellent."

"Bring them quick, then; I am fainting with hunger."

She soon laid the table for two and put on it all the food she had. The cheese was Roquefort and the ham had been covered with jelly. About ten persons with reasonable appetites should have been able to sup on what there was, but (how, I know not) the whole disappeared and also two bottles of Chambertin, which I seem to taste now. My sweetheart's eyes gleamed with pleasure; truly Chambertin and Roquefort are excellent things to restore an old love and ripen a young one.

"Don't you want to know what your aunt has been doing the last two hours with 'M. Sixtimes'?"

"They are playing, perhaps; but there is a small hole in the wall and I will look and see. I can see only the two candles; the wicks are an inch long."

"Didn't I say so? Give me a coverlet and I will sleep on the sofa here and do you go to bed. But let me look at it first."

She made me come into her little room, where I saw a pretty bed, a prayer desk and a large crucifix.

"Your bed is too small for you, dear heart."

"Oh, not at all! I am very comfortable." And, so saying, she lay down at full length.

"What a beautiful wife I shall have! Nay, don't move, let me look at you so." My hand began to press the bosom of her dress, where were imprisoned two spheres which seemed to lament their captivity. I went further, I began to untie strings . . . for where does desire stop?

"Sweetheart, I cannot resist, but you will not love me afterwards."

"I will always love you."

Soon her beautiful breasts were exposed to my burning kisses. The flame of my love lit another in her heart and, forgetting her former self, she opened her arms to me, making me promise not to despise her—and what would one not promise? The modesty inherent in the sex, the fear of results, perhaps a kind of instinct which reveals them the natural faithlessness of men make women ask for such promises; but what mistress, if really amorous, would even think of asking her lover to respect her in the moment of delirious ecstasy, when all one's being is centered on the fulfilment of desire?

After we had passed an hour in these amorous toyings, which set my sweetheart on fire, her charms having never before been exposed to the burning lips or the free caresses of a man, I said to her, "I grieve

to leave you without having rendered to your beauty the greatest homage which it deserves so well."

A sigh was her only answer.

It was cold, the fire was out and I had to spend the night on the sofa.

"Give me a coverlet, dearest, that I may go away from you, for I should die here between love and cold if you made me abstain."

"Lie where I have been, sweetheart. I will get up and rekindle the fire."

She got up and, as she put a stick to the fire, the flame leapt up; I rose and pressed her to my heart; she returned my caresses, and till daybreak we gave ourselves up to an ecstasy of love.

She then left me and, after making a good fire, went to her room, and I remained on the sofa and slept till noon. I was awakened by Madame X—, who wore a graceful *négligé*.

"Still asleep, M. Casanova?"

"Ah! good morning, madame, good morning. And what has become of my friend?"

"He has become mine; I have forgiven him."

"What has he done to be worthy of so generous a pardon?"

"He proved to me that he had made a mistake."

"I am delighted to hear it; where is he?"

"He has gone home, where you will find him; but don't say anything about your spending the night here or he will think it was spent with my niece. I am very much obliged to you for what you have done, and I have only to ask you to be discreet."

"You can count on me entirely, for I am grateful to you for having forgiven my friend."

"Who would not do so? The dear young man is something more than mortal. If you knew how he loves me! I am grateful to him, and I have taken him to board for a year; he will be well lodged, well fed and so on."

"What a delightful plan! You have arranged the terms, I suppose?"

"All that will be settled in a friendly way and we shall not need to have recourse to arbitration. We shall set out to-day for Villette, where I have a nice little house; for you know that it is necessary at first to act in such a way as to give no opportunity to slanderers. My lover will have all he wants, and whenever you, sir, honour us with your presence, you will find a pretty room and a good bed at your disposal. All I am sorry for is that you will find it tedious; my poor niece is dull."

"Madame, your niece is delightful; she gave me yesterday evening an excellent supper and kept me company till three o'clock this morning."

"Really? I can't make out how she gave you anything, as there was nothing in the house."

"At any rate, madame, she gave me an excellent supper, of which

there are no remains, and, after keeping me company, she went to bed and I had a good night on this comfortable sofa."

"I am glad that you, like myself, were pleased with everything, but I did not think my niece so clever."

"She is very clever, madame—in my eyes, at all events."

"Oh, sir! you are a judge of wit; let us go and see her. She has locked her door. Come, open the door! Why have you shut yourself up, you little prude? What are you afraid of? M. Casanova is incapable of hurting you."

The niece opened her door and apologised for the disorder of her dress, but what costume could have suited her better? Her beauty was dazzling.

"There she is," said the aunt, "and she is not so bad-looking after all, but it is a pity she is so stupid. You were very right to give this gentleman a supper. I am much obliged to you for doing so. I have been playing all night, and, when one is playing, one thinks only of the game. I have determined on taking young Tiretta to board with us. He is an excellent and clever young man and I am sure he will learn to speak French before long. Get dressed, my dear, as we must begin to pack. We shall set out this afternoon for Villette and shall spend there the whole of the spring. There is no need, you know, to say anything about this to my sister."

"I, aunt? Certainly not. Did I ever tell her anything on the other occasions?"

"Other occasions! You see what a silly girl she is. Do you mean by 'other occasions', that I have been circumstanced like this before?"

"No, aunt. I only meant to say that I had never told her anything of what you did."

"That's right, my dear, but you must learn to express yourself properly. We dine at two and I hope to have the pleasure of M. Casanova's company at dinner; we will start immediately after the meal. Tiretta promised to bring his small portmanteau with him, and it will go with our luggage."

After promising to dine with them, I bade the ladies goodbye and went home as fast as I could walk, for I was as curious as a woman to know what arrangements had been made.

"Well," said I to Tiretta, "I find you have got a place. Tell me all about it."

"My dear fellow, I have sold myself for a year. My pay is to be twenty-five louis a month, a good table, good lodging, etc., etc."

"I congratulate you."

"Do you think it is worth the trouble?"

"There's no rose without a thorn. She told me you were something more than mortal."

"I worked hard all night to prove it to her; but I am quite sure your time was better employed than mine."

"I slept like a king. Dress yourself, as I am coming to dinner and I want to see you set out for Villette. I shall come and see you there

now and then, as your sweetheart has told me that a room shall be set apart for my convenience."

We arrived at two o'clock. Madame X—, dressed in a girlish style, presented a singular appearance, but Mlle. de la Meure's beauty shone like a star. Love and pleasure had given her a new life, a new being. We had a capital dinner, as the good lady had put coquetry into the repast, as into her costume; but in the dishes there was nothing absurd, while her whole appearance was comic in the highest degree. At four they all set out and I spent my evening at the Italian comedy.

I was in love with Mlle. de la Meure, but Silvia's daughter, whose company at supper was all I had of her, weakened a love which now left nothing more to desire.

We complain of women who, though loving us and sure of our love, refuse us their favours, but we are all wrong in doing so, for, if they love, they have good reasons to fear lest they lose us in the moment of satisfying our desires. Naturally they should do all in their power to retain our hearts, and the best way to do so is to cherish our desire of possessing them; but desire is kept alive only by being denied; enjoyment kills it, since one cannot desire what one has got. I am, therefore, of opinion that women are quite right to refuse us. But, if it be granted that the passions of the two sexes are of equal strength, how comes it that a man never refuses to gratify a woman who loves him and entreats him to be kind?

We cannot accept the argument founded on the fear of results, as that is a particular and not a general consideration. Our conclusion, then, will be that the reason lies in the fact that a man thinks more of the pleasure he imparts than that which he receives and is therefore eager to impart his bliss to another. We know also that, as a general rule, women, when once enjoyed, double their love and affection. On the other hand, women think more of the pleasure they receive than of that which they impart and therefore put off enjoyment as long as possible, since they fear that, in giving themselves up, they lose their chief object—their own pleasure. This feeling is peculiar to the sex and is the only cause of coquetry, pardonable in a woman, detestable in a man.

Silvia's daughter loved me and she knew I loved her, although I had never said so, but woman's wit is keen. At the same time she endeavoured not to let me know her feelings, as she was afraid of encouraging me to ask favours of her and she did not feel sure of her strength to refuse them; and she knew my inconstant nature. Her relatives intended her for Clément, who had been teaching her the clavichord for the last three years. She knew of the arrangement and had no objection, for, though she did not love him, she liked him very well. Most girls are wedded without love and are not sorry for it afterwards. They know that by marriage they become of some consequence in the world, and they marry to have a house of their own and a good position in society. They seem to know that a husband and a lover need not be synonymous terms. In Paris men are

actuated by the same views and most marriages are matters of *convenance*. The French are jealous of their mistresses but never of their wives.

There could be no doubt that M. Clément was very much in love, and Mlle. Baletti was delighted that I noticed it, as she thought this would bring me to a declaration, and she was quite right. The departure of Mlle. de la Meure had a good deal to do with my determination to declare myself; and I was very sorry to have done so afterwards, for, after I had told her I loved her, Clément was dismissed, and my position was worse than before. The man who declares his love for a woman in words needs to be sent to school again.

Three days after Tiretta's departure, I took him what small belongings he had and Madame X— seemed very glad to see me. The Abbé des Forges arrived just as we were sitting down to dinner and, though he had been very friendly to me in Paris, he did not so much as look at me all through the meal and treated Tiretta in the same way. I, for my part, took no notice of him but Tiretta, not so patient as I, at last lost his temper and got up, begging Madame X— to tell him whenever she was going to have that fellow to dine with her. We rose from table without saying a word and the silent abbé went with madame into another room.

Tiretta took me to see his room, which was handsomely furnished and, as was right, adjoined his sweetheart's. Whilst he was putting his things in order, Mlle. de la Meure made me come and see my apartment. It was a very nice room on the ground floor, facing hers. I took care to point out to her how easily I could pay her a visit after everyone was in bed, but she said we should not be comfortable in her room and that she would consequently save me the trouble of getting out of bed. It will be guessed that I had no objections to make to this arrangement.

She then told me of her aunt's madness about Tiretta.

"She believes," said she, "that we do not know he sleeps with her."

"Believes or pretends to believe."

"Possibly. She rang for me at eleven o'clock this morning and told me to go and ask him what kind of night he had passed. I did so, but, seeing his bed had not been slept in, I asked him if he had not gone to bed.

"No," said he, 'I have been writing all night, but please don't say anything about it to your aunt.' I promised with all my heart to be as silent as the grave."

"Does he make sheep's eyes at you?"

"No, but, if he did, it would be all the same. Though he is not over sharp, I believe he knows what I think of him."

"Why have you such a poor opinion of him?"

"Why? My aunt pays him! I think selling oneself is a dreadful idea."

"But you pay me."

"Yes, but in the same coin as you give me."

The old aunt was always calling her niece "stupid," but on the contrary I thought her very clever and as virtuous as clever. I could never have seduced her if she had not been brought up in a convent.

I went back to Tiretta and had some pleasant conversation with him. I asked him how he liked his place.

"I don't like it much, but, as it costs me nothing, I am not absolutely wretched."

"But her face!"

"I don't look at it, and there's one thing I like about her—she is so clean."

"Does she take good care of you?"

"Oh, yes, she is full of feeling for me. This morning she refused the greeting I offered her. 'I am sure,' said she, 'that my refusal will pain you, but your health is so dear to me that I feel bound to look after it.'"

As soon as the gloomy Abbé des Forges was gone and Madame X—was alone, we rejoined her. She treated me as her gossip and played the timid child for Tiretta's benefit, and he played up to her admirably, much to my admiration.

"I shall see no more of that foolish priest," said she, "for, after telling me that I was lost both in this world and the next, he threatened to abandon me and I took him at his word."

An actress named Quinault, who had left the stage and lived close by, came to call, and soon after Madame Favart and the Abbé de Voisenon arrived, followed by Madame Amelin with a handsome lad named Calabre, whom she called her nephew. He was as like her as two peas, but she did not seem to think that a sufficient reason for confessing she was his mother. M. Paton, a Piedmontese, who also came with her, made a bank at faro and in a couple of hours won everybody's money with the exception of mine, as I knew better than to play. My time was better occupied in the company of my sweet mistress. I saw through the Piedmontese and had put him down as a knave, but Tiretta was not so sharp and consequently lost all the money he had in his pockets and a hundred louis besides. The banker, having reaped a good harvest, put down the cards and Tiretta told him in good Italian that he was a cheat, to which the Piedmontese replied with great coolness that he lied. Thinking that the quarrel might have an unpleasant ending, I told him that Tiretta was only jesting, and I made my friend say so, too. He then left the company and went to his room.

Eight years afterwards I saw this Paton at St. Petersburg, and in the same year 1767 he was assassinated in Poland.

The same evening I preached Tiretta a severe yet friendly sermon. I pointed out to him that, when he played, he was at the mercy of the banker, who might be a rogue but a man of courage, too, and so, in calling him a cheat, he was risking his life.

"Am I to let myself be robbed then?"

"Yes, you have a free choice in the matter; nobody makes you play."

"I certainly will not pay him that hundred louis."

"I advise you to do so, and to do so before you are asked."

"You have a knack of persuading one to do what you will, even though one be disposed to take no notice of your advice."

"That's because I speak from the heart and the head at the same time and had some experience in these affairs as well."

Three quarters of an hour afterwards I went to bed and my mistress came to me before long. We spent a sweeter night than before.

Next day, after dining with the family and admiring the roses on my sweetheart's cheeks, I returned to Paris. Three or four days later Tiretta came to tell me that the Dunkirk merchant had arrived, that he was coming to dine at Madame X—'s, and that she requested me to make one of the party. I was prepared for the news, but the blood rushed into my face. Tiretta saw it and to a certain extent divined my feelings. "You are in love with the niece," said he.

"Why do you think so?"

"By the mystery you make about her; but love betrays itself even by its silence."

"You are a knowing fellow, Tiretta. I will come to dinner, but don't say a word to anybody."

My heart was rent in twain. Possibly, if the merchant had put off his arrival for a month, I should have welcomed it; but to have only just lifted the nectar to my lips and to see the precious vessel escape from my hands! To this day I can recall my feelings, and the very recollection is not devoid of bitterness.

I was in a fearful state of perplexity, as I always was whenever it was necessary for me to resolve and I felt that I could not do so. If the reader has been placed in the same position, he will understand my feelings. I could not make up my mind to consent to her marrying, nor could I resolve to wed her myself and gain assured happiness.

I went to Villette and was a little surprised to find Mlle. de la Meure more elaborately dressed than usual.

"Your intended," I said, "would have pronounced you charming without all that."

"My aunt doesn't think so."

"You have not seen him yet?"

"No, but I should like to, although I trust, with your help, never to become his wife."

Soon after he arrived with Corneman, the banker, who had been the agent in this business transaction. The merchant was a fine man, about forty, with a frank and open face. His dress was good, though not elaborate. He introduced himself simply but in a polite manner to Madame X—, and he did not look at his future wife till the aunt presented her to him. His manner immediately became more pleasing, and, without making use of flowers of speech, he said in a very feeling way that he trusted the impression he had made on her was equal

to that which she had made on him. Her only answer was a low curtsy, but she studied him carefully.

Dinner was served and in the course of the meal we talked of almost everything—except marriage. The happy pair caught each other's eyes only by chance and did not speak to one another. After dinner Mlle. de la Meure went to her room, and the aunt went into her closet with the banker and the merchant, and they were in close conversation for two hours. At the end of that time the gentlemen were obliged to return to Paris, and Madame X—, after summoning her niece, told the merchant she would expect him to dinner on the day following and that she was sure that her niece would be glad to see him again.

"Won't you, my dear?"

"Yes, aunt, I shall be very glad to see the gentleman again."

If she had not answered thus, the merchant would have gone away without hearing his future bride speak.

"Well," said the aunt, "what do you think of your husband?"

"Allow me to put off my answer till to-morrow; but be good enough, when we are at table, to draw me into the conversation, for it is very possible that my face has not repelled him, but so far he knows nothing of my mental powers; possibly my want of wit may destroy any slight impression my face may have made."

"Yes, I am afraid you will begin to talk nonsense and make him lose the good opinion he seems to have formed of you."

"It is not right to deceive anybody. If he is disabused of his fictitious ideas by the appearance of the truth, so much the better for him; and so much the worse for both of us if we decide on marrying without the slightest knowledge of each other's habits and ways of thought."

"What do you think of him?"

"I think he is rather nice-looking and his manners are kind and polite, but let us wait till to-morrow. Perhaps he will have nothing more to say to me; I am so stupid."

"I know very well that you think yourself very clever, and that's where your fault lies; it's your self-conceit which makes you stupid, although M. Casanova takes you for a wit."

"Perhaps he may know what he is talking about."

"My poor dear, he is only laughing at you."

"I have good reasons for thinking otherwise, aunt."

"There you go; you will never get any sense."

"Pardon me, madame, if I cannot be of your opinion," I interposed. "Mademoiselle is quite right in saying that I do not laugh at her. I dare to say that to-morrow she will shine in the conversation."

"You think so? I am glad to hear it. Now let us have a game of piquet, and I will play against you and my niece, for she must learn the game."

Tiretta asked leave of his darling to go to the play and we played on till supper-time. On his return Tiretta made us almost die of laughing with his attempts to tell us in his broken French the plot of the play he had seen.

I had been in my bedroom for a quarter of an hour, expecting to see my sweetheart in some pretty kind of undress, when all of a sudden I saw her come in with all her clothes on. I was surprised at this circumstance and it seemed to me of evil omen.

"You are astonished to see me thus," said she, "but I want to speak to you for a moment, and then I will take off my clothes. Tell me plainly whether I am to consent to this marriage or no?"

"How do you like him?"

"Fairly well."

"Consent, then."

"Very good; farewell! From this moment our love ends and our friendship begins. Get you to bed, and I will go and do the same. Farewell!"

"No, stay and let our friendship begin to-morrow."

"Not so, were my refusal to cost the lives of both of us. You know what it must cost me to speak thus, but it is my irrevocable determination. If I am to become another's wife, I must take care to be worthy of him; perhaps I may be happy. Do not hold me; let me go! You know how well I love you."

"At least, let us have one final embrace."

"Alas! no."

"You are weeping."

"No, I am not. In God's name, let me go!"

"Dear heart, you go but to weep in your chamber; stay here. I will marry you."

"Nay, no more of that."

With these words, she made an effort, escaped from my hands and fled from the room. I was covered with shame and regret and could not sleep. I hated myself, for I knew not whether I had sinned most grievously in seducing her or in abandoning her to another.

I stayed to dinner next day, in spite of my heartbreak and my sadness. Mlle. de la Meure talked so brilliantly and sensibly to her intended that one could easily see he was enchanted with her. As for me, feeling that I had nothing pleasant to say, I pretended to have the toothache as an excuse for not talking. Sick at heart, absent-minded and feeling the effects of a sleepless night, I was well-nigh mad with love, jealousy and despair. Mlle. de la Meure did not speak to me once, did not so much as look at me. She was quite right, but I did not think so then. I thought the dinner would never come to an end, and I do not think I was ever present at so painful a meal.

As we rose from the table, Madame X— went into her closet with her niece and nephew-that-was-to-be, and the niece came out in the course of an hour and bade us congratulate her, as she was to be married in a week and after the wedding she would accompany her husband to Dunkirk. "To-morrow," she added, "we are all to dine with M. Corneman, where the deed of settlement will be signed."

I cannot imagine how it was I did not fall dead on the spot. My anguish cannot be expressed.

Before long it was proposed that we should go to the play, but, excusing myself on the plea of business, I returned to Paris. As I got to my door, I seemed to be in a fever, and I lay down on my bed, but, instead of the rest I needed, I experienced only remorse and fruitless repentance, the torments of the damned. I began to think it was my duty to stop the marriage or die. I was sure that Mlle. de la Meure loved me, and I fancied she would not say "no" if I told her that her refusal to marry me would cost me my life. Full of that idea, I rose and wrote her a letter, strong with all the strength of tumultuous passion. This was some relief and, getting into bed, I slept till morning. As soon as I was awake, I summoned a messenger and promised him twelve francs if he would deliver my letter and report its receipt in an hour and a half. My letter was under cover of a note addressed to Tiretta, in which I told him that I should not leave the house till I had got an answer. I had my answer four hours after. It ran as follows:

"Dearest, it is too late; you have decided my destiny and I cannot go back on my word. Come to the dinner at M. Corneman's and be sure that in a few weeks we shall be congratulating ourselves on having won a great victory. Our love, crowned all too soon, will soon live only in our memories. I beg of you to write to me no more."

Such was my fate. Her refusal, with the still more cruel charge not to write to her again, made me furious. In it I saw only inconstancy. I thought she had fallen in love with the merchant. My state of mind may be judged from the fact that I determined to kill my rival. The most savage plans, the most cruel designs ran a race through my bewildered brain. I was jealous, in love, a different being from my ordinary self; anger, vanity and shame had destroyed my powers of reasoning. The charming girl whom I was forced to admire, whom I should have esteemed all the more for the course she had taken, whom I had regarded as an angel, became in my eyes a hateful monster, a meet object for punishment. At last I determined on a sure method of revenge, which I knew to be both dishonourable and cowardly, but in my blind passion I did not hesitate for a moment. I resolved to go to the merchant at M. Corneman's, where he was staying, to tell him all that had passed between the lady and myself, and, if that did not make him renounce the idea of marrying her, I would tell him that one of us must die, and, if he refused my challenge, I determined to assassinate him.

With this terrible plan in my brain, which makes me shudder now when I think of it, I ate with the appetite of a wild beast, lay down and slept till day. I was in the same mind when I awoke and dressed hastily yet carefully, put two good pistols in my pocket and went to M. Corneman's. My rival was still asleep; I waited for him and for a quarter of an hour my thoughts only grew more bitter and my determination more fixed. All at once he came into the room in his dressing-gown and received me with open arms, telling me in the kindest of voices that he had been expecting me to call, as he could

guess what feelings I, a friend of his future wife's, would have for him and saying that his friendship for me would always be as warm as hers.

His honest, open face, his straightforward words overwhelmed me and I was silent for a few minutes—in fact, I did not know what to say. Luckily he gave me time enough to recollect myself, as he talked on for a quarter of an hour without noticing that I did not open my lips.

M. Corneman then came in; coffee was served and my speech returned to me; but I am happy to say I refrained from playing the dishonourable part I had intended; the crisis was passed.

It may be remarked that the fiercest spirits are like a cord stretched too tight, which either breaks or relaxes. I have known several persons of that temperament—amongst others, the Chevalier L—, who in a fit of passion used to feel his soul escaping by every pore. If, at the moment when his anger burst, he was able to break something and make a great noise, he calmed down in an instant, reason resumed her sway and the raging lion became as mild as a lamb.

After I had taken a cup of coffee, I felt myself calmed but yet dizzy in the head, so I bade them good-morning and went out. I was astonished but delighted that I had not carried my detestable scheme into effect. I was humbled by being forced to confess to myself that chance, and chance alone, had saved me from becoming a villain. As I was reflecting on what had happened, I met my brother and he completed my cure. I took him to dine at Silvia's and stayed there till midnight. I saw that Mlle. Baletti would make me forget the fair inconstant, whom I wisely determined not to see again before the wedding. To make sure, I set out the next day for Versailles, to look after my interests with the government.

CHAPTER 57

A NEW career was opening before me. Fortune was still my friend and I had all the necessary qualities to second the efforts of the blind goddess on my behalf save one—perseverance. My immoderate life of pleasure annulled the effect of all my other qualities.

M. de Bernis received me in his usual manner, that is, more like a friend than a minister. He asked me if I had any inclination for a secret mission.

"Have I the necessary talents?"

"I think so."

"I have an inclination for all honest means of earning a livelihood, and as for my talents I will take Your Excellency's opinion for granted."

This last observation made him smile, as I had intended.

After a few words spoken at random on the memories of bygone years which time had not entirely effaced, the minister told me to go to the Abbé de la Ville and use his name.

This abbé, the chief permanent official of the Foreign Office, was a man of cold temperament, a profound diplomatist, the soul of the

department and high in favour with His Excellency the minister. He had served the state well as an agent at The Hague and his grateful king rewarded him by giving him a bishopric on the day of his death. It was a little late but kings have not always sufficient leisure to remember things. His heir was a wealthy man named Garnier, who had formerly been chief cook at M. d'Argenson's and had become rich by profiting by the friendship Abbé de la Ville had always had for him. These two friends, who were nearly of the same age, had deposited their wills in the hands of the same attorney and each had made the other his residuary legatee.

After the abbé had delivered a brief discourse on the nature of secret missions and the discretion necessary to those charged with them, he told me he would let me know when anything suitable for me presented itself.

I made the acquaintance of the Abbé Galiani, the secretary of the Neapolitan embassy. He was a brother to the Marquis de Galiani, of whom I shall speak when we come to my Italian travels. The Abbé Galiani was a man of wit. He had a knack of making the most serious subjects appear comic, and, being a good talker, speaking French with the ineradicable Neapolitan accent, he was a favourite in every circle he cared to enter. The Abbé de la Ville told him Voltaire had complained that his *Henriade* had been translated into Neapolitan verse in such a manner that it excited laughter.

"Voltaire is wrong," said Galiani, "for the Neapolitan dialect is of such a nature that it is impossible to write verses in it that are not laughable. And why should he be vexed? He who makes people laugh is sure of being beloved. The Neapolitan dialect is truly a singular one; we have in it translations of the *Bible* and of the *Iliad*, and both are comic."

"I can imagine that the *Bible* would be, but I should not have thought that would have been the case with the *Iliad*."

"It is, nevertheless."

I did not return to Paris till the day before the departure of Mlle. de la Meure, now Madame P—. I felt in duty bound to go and see her, give her my congratulations and wish her a pleasant journey. I found her in good spirits and quite at her ease, and, far from being vexed at this, I was pleased—a certain sign that I was cured. We talked without the slightest constraint and I thought her husband a perfect gentleman. He invited me to visit him at Dunkirk and I promised to go, without intending to do so, but the fates willed otherwise.

Tiretta was now left alone with his darling, who grew more infatuated with her Strephon every day, so well did he prove his love for her.

With a mind at ease, I now set myself to sentimentalise with Mlle. Baletti, who gave me every day some new mark of the progress I was making.

The friendship and respect I bore her family made the idea of seduction out of the question, but, as I grew more and more in love with her and had no thoughts of marriage, I should have been puzzled

to say at what end I was aiming, and so let myself glide along the stream without thinking where I was going.

In the beginning of May the Abbé de Bernis told me to come and call on him at Versailles, but first to see the Abbé de la Ville. The first question the abbé asked me was whether I thought myself capable of paying a visit to eight or ten men-of-war in the roads at Dunkirk, making the acquaintance of the officers and completing a minute and circumstantial report on the victualling, the number of seamen, the guns, ammunition, discipline, etc., etc.

"I will make the attempt," I said, "and hand you in my report on my return, and it will be for you to say if I have succeeded or not."

"As this is a secret mission, I cannot give you a letter of commendation; I can only give you some money and wish you a pleasant journey."

"I do not wish to be paid in advance; on my return you can give me what you think fit. I shall want three or four days before setting out, as I must procure some letters of introduction."

"Very good. Try to come back before the end of the month. I have no further instructions to give you."

On the same day I had some conversation at the Palais Bourbon with my patron, who could not admire sufficiently my delicacy in refusing payment in advance; and, taking advantage of my having done so, he made me accept a packet of a hundred louis. This was the last occasion on which I made use of his purse; I did not borrow from him in Rome fourteen years afterwards.

"As you are on a secret mission, my dear Casanova, I cannot give you a passport. I am sorry for it, but, if I did so, your object would be suspected. However, you will easily be able to get one from the first gentleman of the chamber on some pretext or other. Silvia will be more useful to you in that way than anybody else. You quite understand how discreet your behaviour must be. Above all, do not get into any trouble; for I suppose you know that, if anything happened to you, it would be of no use to talk of your mission. We should be obliged to know nothing about you, for ambassadors are the only avowed spies. Remember that you must be even more careful and reserved than they, and yet, if you wish to succeed, all this must be concealed and you must have an air of freedom from constraint, that you may inspire confidence. If, on your return, you like to show me your report before handing it in, I will tell you what may require to be left out or added."

Full of this affair, the importance of which I exaggerated in proportion to my inexperience, I told Silvia that I wanted to accompany some English friends as far as Calais and that she would oblige me by getting me a passport from the Duc de Gesvres. Always ready to oblige me, she sat down directly and wrote the duke a letter, telling me to deliver it myself, since my personal description was necessary. These passports carry legal weight in the Ile-de-France only, but they procure one respect in all the northern parts of the kingdom.

Fortified with Silvia's letter and accompanied by her husband, I went to the duke, who was at his estate at St. Toin, and he had scarcely read the letter through before he gave me the passport. Satisfied on this point, I went to Villette and asked Madame X— if she had anything I could take to her niece. "You can take her the box of china statuettes," said she, "if M. Corneman has not sent them already." I called on the banker, who gave me the box and, in return for a hundred louis, a letter of credit on a Dunkirk house. I begged him to name me in the letter in a special manner, as I was going for the sake of pleasure. He seemed glad to oblige me and I started the same evening, and three days later I was at the Hôtel de la Conciergerie, in Dunkirk.

An hour after my arrival I gave the charming Madame P— an agreeable surprise by handing her the box and giving her her aunt's messages. Just as she was praising her husband and telling me how happy she was, he came in, and, saying he was delighted to see me, asked me to stay in his house, without inquiring whether my stay in Dunkirk would be a long or short one. I of course declined with many thanks and, after promising to dine now and again at his house, begged him to take me to the banker on whom I had a letter.

The banker read my letter and gave me the hundred louis and asked me to wait for him at my inn, where he would come for me with the governor, a M. de Barail. This gentleman, who, like most Frenchmen, was very polite, after making some ordinary inquiries, asked me to sup with him and his wife, who was still at the play. The lady gave me as kind a reception as I had received from her husband. After we had partaken of an excellent supper, several persons arrived and play commenced, in which I did not join, as I wished to study the society of the place and, above all, certain officers of both services who were present. By speaking with an air of authority about naval matters and by saying that I had served in the navy of the Venetian Republic, in three days I not only knew, but was intimate with, all the captains of the Dunkirk fleet. I talked at random about naval architecture, on the Venetian system of manœuvres, and noticed that the jolly sailors were more interested in my blunders than in my sensible remarks.

Four days after I had come to Dunkirk, one of the captains asked me to dinner on his ship and after that all the others did the same; and on every occasion I stayed on the ship for the rest of the day. I was curious about everything—and Jack is so trustful! I went into the hold, asked questions innumerable and found plenty of young officers delighted to show their own importance, who gossiped without needing any encouragement from me. I took care, however, to learn everything which would be of service to me and in the evenings I put down on paper all the mental notes I had made during the day. Four or five hours was all I allowed myself for sleep, and in fifteen days I found I had learnt enough.

Pleasure, gaming and idleness, my usual companions, had no part in this expedition, and I devoted all my energies to the object of my

mission. I dined once with the banker, once with Madame P— in town and once in a pretty country house which her husband had at about a league's distance from Dunkirk. She took me there herself, and, on finding myself alone with the woman I had loved so well, I delighted her by the delicacy of my behaviour, which was marked only by respect and friendship. As I still thought her charming and as our connection had ended only six weeks before, I was astonished to see myself so quiet, knowing my disposition too well to attribute my restraint to virtue. What, then, was the reason? An Italian proverb, speaking for nature, gives the true solution of the riddle. *La mona non vuol pensieri*, and my head was full of this thought.

My task was done and, bidding goodbye to all my friends, I set out in my post-chaise for Paris, going by another way for the sake of a change. About midnight, on my asking for horses and some stage the name of which I forget, they told me that the next stage was the fortified town of Aire, which we should not be allowed to pass through at night-time.

"Get me the horses," said I. "I will make them open the gates."

I was obeyed and in due time we reached the gates. The postillion cracked his whip and the sentry cried out, "Who goes there?"

"Express messenger."

After making me wait for an hour, the gate was opened and I was told that I must go and speak to the governor. I did so, fretting and fuming on my way as if I were some great person, and I was taken to a room where a man in an elegant nightcap was lying beside a very pretty woman.

"Whose messenger are you?"

"Nobody's, but as I am in a hurry . . ."

"That will do. We will talk the matter over to-morrow. In the meanwhile you will accept the hospitality of the guardroom."

"But, sir . . ."

"But me no buts, if you please; leave the room."

I was taken to the guardroom, where I spent the night seated on the ground. The daylight appeared. I shouted, swore, made all the racket I could, said I wanted to go on, but nobody took any notice of me.

Ten o'clock struck. More impatient than I can say, I raised my voice and spoke to the officer, telling him that the governor might assassinate me if he liked, but had no right to deny me pen and paper or deprive me of the power of sending a messenger to Paris.

"Your name, sir?"

"Here is my passport."

He told me he would take it to the governor, but I snatched it away from him.

"Would you like to see the governor?"

"Yes, I should."

We started for the governor's apartments. The officer was the first to enter and in two minutes came out again and brought me in. I gave up my passport in proud silence. The governor read it through, exam-

ining me all the while to see if I was the person described; he then gave it me back, telling me I was free to go where I liked.

"Not so fast, sir, I am not in such a hurry now. I shall send a messenger to Paris and wait his return; for, by stopping me on my journey, you have violated all the rights of the citizen."

"You violated them yourself in calling yourself a messenger."

"Not at all; I told you that I was not one."

"Yes, but you told your postillion that you were and that comes to the same thing."

"The postillion is a liar; I told him nothing of the kind."

"Why didn't you show your passport?"

"Why didn't you give me time to do so? In the course of the next few days we shall see who is right."

"Just as you please."

I went out with the officer, who took me to the posting-place, and a minute afterwards my carriage drew up. The posting-place was also an inn, and I told the landlord to have a special messenger ready to carry out my orders, to give me a good room and a good bed and to serve me some rich soup immediately; and I warned him that I was accustomed to good fare. I had my portmanteau and all my belongings taken to my room and, having washed and put on my dressing-gown, I sat down to write, to whom I did not know, for I was quite wrong in my contention. However, I had begun by playing the great man and I thought myself bound in honour to sustain the part, without thinking whether I should have to back out of it or no. All the same, I was vexed at having to wait in Aire till the return of the messenger whom I was about to send to—the moon! In the meanwhile, not having closed an eye all night, I determined to take a rest. I was sitting in my shirtsleeves and eating the soup which had been served to me when the governor came in unaccompanied. I was both surprised and delighted to see him.

"I am sorry for what has happened, sir, and above all that you think you have good reason for complaint, inasmuch as I only did my duty, for how was I to imagine that your postillion had called you a messenger on his own responsibility?"

"That's all very well, sir, but your sense of duty need not have made you drive me from your room."

"I was in need of sleep."

"I am in the same position at the present moment, but a feeling of politeness prevents me from imitating your example."

"May I ask if you have ever been in the service?"

"I have served by land and sea and left off when most people are only beginning."

"In that case you will be aware that the gates of a fortified town are opened at night only to the King's messengers or to military superiors."

"Yes, I know; but, since they were opened, the thing was done and you might as well have been polite."

"Will you put on your clothes and walk a short distance with me?"

His invitation pleased me as well as his pride had displeased me. I had been thinking of a duel as a possible solution of the difficulty, but the present course took all the trouble out of my hands. I answered quietly and politely that the honour of walking with him would be enough to make me put off all other calls, and I asked him to be seated whilst I made haste to dress.

I drew on my breeches, throwing the splendid pistols in my pockets on to the bed, called up the barber and in ten minutes was ready. I put on my sword and we went out.

We walked silently enough along two or three streets, passed through a gate, up a court, till we got to a door where my guide stopped short. He asked me to come in and I found myself in a fine room full of people. I did not think of going back but behaved as if I had been in my own house.

"Sir—my wife," said the governor, and, turning to her without pausing, "here is M. de Casanova, who has come to dinner with us."

"I am delighted to hear it, sir, as otherwise I should have had no chance of forgiving you for waking me up the other night."

"I have paid dearly for my fault, madame, but, after the purgatory I have endured, I am sure you will allow me to be happy in this paradise."

She answered with a charming smile and, after asking me to sit beside her, she continued whatever conversation was possible in the midst of a game at cards.

I found myself completely outwitted, but the thing was done so pleasantly that all I could do was to put a good face on it, a feat which I found sufficiently easy from the relief I felt at no longer being bound to send a messenger to I did not know whom.

The governor, well satisfied with his victory, got all at once into high spirits and began to talk about military matters, the Court and general topics, often addressing me with that friendly ease which good French society knows so well how to reconcile with the rules of politeness; no one could have guessed that there had ever been the slightest difference between us. He had made himself the hero of the piece by the dexterous manner in which he had led up to the situation, but I had a fair claim to the second place, for I had made an experienced officer high in command give me the most flattering kind of satisfaction, which bore witness to the esteem with which I had inspired him.

The dinner was served. The success of my part depended on the manner in which it was played, and my wit has seldom been keener than during that meal. The whole conversation was in a pleasant vein, and I took great care to give the governor's wife opportunities for shining in it. She was a charming and pretty woman, still quite youthful, for she was at least thirty years younger than the governor. Nothing was said about my six hours' stay in the guardroom, but at dessert the governor escaped speaking plainly by a joke that was not worth the trouble of making.

"You're a nice man," said he, "to think I was going to fight you. Ah! ah! I have caught you, haven't I?"

"Who told you I was meditating a duel?"

"Confess that such was the case?"

"I protest; there is a great difference between believing and supposing; the one is positive, the other merely hypothetical. I must confess, however, that your invitation to take a walk roused my curiosity as to what was to come next, and I admire your wit. But you must believe me that I do not regard myself caught in a trap—far from that, I am so well pleased that I feel grateful to you."

In the afternoon we all took a walk and I gave my arm to the charming mistress of the house. In the evening I took my leave and set out early the next day, having made a fair copy of my report.

At five o'clock in the morning I was fast asleep in my carriage when I was suddenly awakened. We were at the gate of Amiens. The fellow at the door was an exciseman—a race everywhere detested and with good cause, for, besides the insolence of their manners, nothing makes a man feel more like a slave than the inquisitorial search they are accustomed to make through one's clothes and most secret possessions. He asked me if I had anything contraband; and, being in a bad temper at being deprived of my sleep to answer such a question, I replied with an oath that I had nothing of the sort and that he would have done better to let me sleep.

"As you talk in that style," said the creature, "we will see what we can see."

He ordered the postillion to pass on with the carriage. He had my luggage hauled down and, not being able to hinder him, I fumed in silence.

I saw my mistake, but there was now nothing to be done; and, having no contraband goods, I had nothing to fear, but my bad temper cost me two weary hours of delay. The joys of vengeance were depicted on the features of the exciseman. At the time of which I am writing, these gaugers were the dregs of the people but would become tractable on being treated with a little politeness. The sum of twenty-four sous given with good grace would make them as supple as a pair of gloves; they would bow to the travellers, wish them a pleasant journey and give no trouble. I knew all this but there are times when a man acts mechanically, as I had unfortunately done.

The scoundrels emptied my boxes and unfolded everything, even to my shirts, between which they said I might have concealed English lace.

After searching everything, they gave me back my keys, but they had not yet done with me; they began to search my carriage. The rascal who was at the head of them suddenly shouted, "Victory!" He had discovered the remainder of a pound of snuff which I had bought at St. Omer on my way to Dunkirk.

With a voice of triumph the chief exciseman gave orders that my carriage should be seized and warned me that I would have to pay a fine of twelve hundred francs.

For the nonce my patience was exhausted, and I leave the names I called them to the imagination of the reader; but they were proof against words. I told them to take me to the superintendent's.

"You can go if you like," said they, "we are not your servants."

Surrounded by a curious crowd, whom the noise had drawn together, I began to walk hurriedly towards the town and, entering the first open shop I came to, I begged the shopkeeper to take me to the superintendent's. As I was telling the circumstances of the case, a man of good appearance, who happened to be in the shop, said that he would be glad to show me the way himself, though he did not think I would find the superintendent in, as he would doubtless be warned of my coming.

"Without your paying either the fine or caution money," said he, "you will find it a hard matter to get yourself out of the difficulty."

I entreated him to show me the way to the superintendent's and not to trouble about anything else. He advised me to give the rabble a louis to buy drink and thus to rid myself of them, on which I gave him the louis, begging him to see to it himself, and the bargain was soon struck. He was a worthy attorney and knew his men.

We got to the superintendent's; but, as my guide had warned me, my gentleman was not to be seen. The porter told us he had gone out alone, that he would not be back before night and that he did not know where he had gone.

"There's a whole day lost, then," said the attorney.

"Let us go and hunt him up; he must have well known resorts and friends, and we will find them out. I will give you a louis for the day's work; will that be enough?"

"Ample."

We spent four hours in vain, looking for the superintendent in ten or twelve houses. I spoke to the masters of all of them, exaggerating considerably the injury that had been done me. I was listened to, consoled with and comforted with the remark that he would certainly be obliged to return to his house at night and then he could not help hearing what I had to say. That would not suit me, so I continued the chase.

At one o'clock the attorney took me to an old lady, who was thought a great deal of in the town. She was dining all by herself. After giving great attention to my story, she said she did not think she could be doing wrong in telling a stranger the whereabouts of an individual who, in virtue of his office, ought never to be inaccessible.

"And so, sir, I may reveal to you what after all is no secret. My daughter told me yesterday evening that she was going to dine at Madame N—'s, and that the superintendent was to be there. Do you go after him now and you will find him at the table in the best society in Amiens, but," said she, with a smile, "I advise you not to give your name at the door. The numerous servants will show you the way without asking for your name. You can then speak to him whether he likes

it or not and, though you don't know him, he will hear all you say. I am sorry I cannot be present at so fine a situation."

I gratefully took leave of the worthy lady and set off in all haste to the house I had been told of, the attorney, who was almost tired out, accompanying me. Without the least difficulty he and I slipped in among the crowds of servants till we got to a hall where there were more than twenty people sitting down to a rich and delicate repast.

"Ladies and gentlemen, you will excuse my troubling your quiet on this festive occasion with a tale of terror."

At these words, uttered in the voice of Jupiter Tonans, everybody rose. The surprise of the high-born company of knights and ladies at my apparition can easily be imagined.

"Since seven o'clock this morning I have been searching from door to door and from street to street for His Honour the superintendent, whom I have at last been fortunate enough to find here, for I know perfectly well that he is present and that, if he have ears, he hears me now. I am come to request him to order his scoundrelly myrmidons, who have seized my carriage, to give it up, so that I may continue my journey. If the laws bid me pay twelve hundred francs for seven ounces of snuff for my own private use, I repudiate those laws and declare that I will not pay a farthing. I shall stay here and send a messenger to my ambassador, who will complain that the *jus gentium* has been violated in the Ile-de-France in my person, and I will have reparation. Louis XV is great enough to refuse to become an accomplice in this strange onslaught. And, if that satisfaction which is my lawful right is not granted me, I will make the thing an affair of state, and my Republic will not revenge itself by assaulting Frenchmen for a few pinches of snuff, but will expel them all root and branch. If you want to know who I am, read this."

Foaming with rage, I threw my passport on the table. A man picked it up and read it, and I knew him to be the superintendent. While my papers were being handed round, I saw expressed on every face surprise and indignation, but the superintendent replied haughtily that he was at Amiens to administer justice and that I could not leave the town unless I paid the fine or gave surety.

"If you are here to do justice, you will look upon my passport as a positive command to speed me on my way, and I bid you yourself be my surety if you are a gentleman."

"Does high birth go bail for breaches of the law in your country?"

"In my country men of high birth do not condescend to take dishonourable employments."

"No service under the King can be dishonourable."

"The hangman would say the same thing."

"Take care what you say."

"Take care what you do. Know, sir, that I am a free man who has been grievously outraged, and know, too, that I fear no one. Throw me out of the window if you dare."

"Sir," said a lady to me in the voice of the mistress of the house, "In my house there is no throwing out of windows."

"Madame, an angry man makes use of terms which his better reason disowns. I am wronged by a most cruel act of injustice, and I humbly crave your pardon for having offended you. Please to reflect that for the first time in my life I have been oppressed and insulted, and that, too, in a kingdom where I thought myself safe from all but highway robbers. For them I have my pistols and for the worthy superintendents I have a passport, but I find the latter useless. For the sake of seven ounces of snuff which I bought at St. Omer three weeks ago, this gentleman robs me and interrupts my journey, though the King's majesty is my surety that no one shall interfere with me; he calls on me to pay fifty louis, he delivers me to the rage of his impudent menials and to the derision of the mob, from whom I had to rid myself by my money, with the aid of this worthy man beside me. I am treated like a scoundrel, and the man who should have been my defender and deliverer slinks away and hides himself, and adds to the insults I have received. His myrmidons have turned my clothes upside down and pitchforked my linen at the foot of the town gates, to revenge themselves on me for not giving them twenty-four sous. To-morrow the manner in which I have been treated shall be known to the diplomatic bodies at Versailles and Paris and in a few days it will be in all the newspapers. I will not pay a farthing because I owe not a farthing. Now, sir, am I to send a courier to the Duc de Gesvres?"

"What you have got to do is to pay, and, if you do not care to pay, you may do whatever you like."

"Then, ladies and gentlemen, goodbye. As for you, sir, we shall meet again."

As I was rushing out of the room like a madman, I heard somebody calling out to me in good Italian to wait a minute. I turned round and saw that the voice had proceeded from a man past middle age, who addressed the superintendent thus:

"Let this gentleman proceed on his journey; I will go bail for him. Do you understand me, superintendent? I will be his surety. You don't know these Italians. I went through the whole of the last war in Italy and I understand the national character. Besides, I think the gentleman is in the right."

"Very good," said the official, turning to me. "All you have to do is to pay a matter of thirty or forty francs at the customs' office, as the affair is already booked."

"I thought I told you that I would not pay a single farthing, and I tell it you again. But who are you, sir," said I, turning to the worthy old man, "who are good enough to become surety for me without knowing me?"

"I am a commissary of musters, sir, and my name is De la Bretonnière. I live in Paris in the Hôtel de Saxe, Rue du Colombier, where I shall be glad to see you day after to-morrow. We will go together to M. Britard, who, after hearing your case, will discharge my bail."

After I had expressed my gratitude and told him that I would wait upon him without fail, I made my excuses to the mistress of the house and the guests and left them.

I took my worthy attorney to dinner at the best inn in the place and gave him two louis for his trouble. Without his help and that of the commissary I should have been in great difficulty; it would have been a case of the earthen pot and the iron pot over again; for with jacks-in-office reason is of no use, and, though I had plenty of money, I would never have let the wretches rob me of fifty louis.

My carriage was drawn up at the door of the tavern, and just as I was getting in, one of the excisemen who had searched my luggage came and told me that I should find everything just as I left it.

"I wonder at that, since it has been left in the hands of men of your stamp. Shall I find the snuff?"

"The snuff has been confiscated, my lord."

"I am sorry for you, then; for, if it had been there, I would have given you a louis."

"I will go and look for it directly."

"I have no time to wait for it. Drive on, postillion."

I got to Paris the next day and four days after I waited on M. de la Bretonnière, who gave me a hearty welcome and took me to M. Britard, the *fermier-général*, who discharged his bail. This M. Britard was a pleasant young man. He blushed when he heard all I had gone through.

I took my report to M. de Bernis at the Hôtel Bourbon and His Excellency spent two hours over it, making me take out all unnecessary matter. I spent the time in making a fair copy and the next day took it to M. de la Ville, who read it through in silence and told me that he would let me know the result. A month after I received five hundred louis and had the pleasure of hearing that M. de Crémille, the first lord of the admiralty, had pronounced my report to be not only perfectly accurate but very suggestive. Certain reasonable apprehensions prevented me from making myself known to him, an honour which M. de Bernis wished to procure for me.

When I told him of my adventures on the way back, he laughed but said that the highest merit of a secret agent was to keep out of difficulties; for, though he might have the tact to extricate himself from them, yet he got talked of, which it should be his chief care to avoid.

This mission cost the admiralty twelve thousand francs, and the minister might easily have procured all the information I gave him without spending a penny. Any intelligent young naval officer would have done it just as well and would have acquitted himself with zeal and discretion, to gain the good opinion of the ministers. But all the French ministers were the same. They lavished money which came out of other people's pockets to enrich their creatures, and they were absolute; the downtrodden people counted for nothing, and of this course the indebtedness of the state and confusion of the finances were the inevitable results. It is quite true that the Revolution was a neces-

sity, but it should have been marked with patriotism and right feeling, not with blood. However, the nobility and clergy were not men of sufficient generosity to make the necessary sacrifices to the king, the state, and themselves.

Silvia was much amused at my adventures at Aire and Amiens, and her charming daughter showed much pity for the bad night I had passed in the guardroom. I told her that the hardship would have been much less if I had had a wife beside me. She replied that a wife, if a good one, would have been only too happy to alleviate my troubles by sharing in them, but her mother observed that a woman of parts, after seeing to the safety of my baggage and my coach, would have busied herself in taking the necessary steps for setting me at liberty, and I supported this opinion as best indicating the real duty of a good wife.

CHAPTER 58

IN spite of my love for Mlle. Baletti, I did not omit to pay my court to the most noted ladies of the pavement; but I was chiefly interested in kept women and those who considered themselves as belonging to the public only in playing before them night by night, queens or chamber-maids. In spite of this affectation, they enjoy what they call their independence, either by devoting themselves to Cupid or to Plutus, and more frequently to both together. As it is not very difficult to make the acquaintance of these priestesses of pleasure and dissipation, I soon got to know several of them.

The halls of the theatres are capital places for amateurs to exercise their talents in intriguing, and I had profited tolerably well by the lessons I had learnt in this fine school. I began by becoming the friend of their lovers, and I often succeeded by pretending to be a man of whom nobody need be afraid.

Camille, an actress and dancer at the Italian play, with whom I had fallen in love at Fontainebleau seven years before, was one of those of whom I was most fond, liking the society at her pretty little house, where she lived with the Count d'Eigreville, who was a friend of mine and fond of my company. He was a brother of the Marquis de Gamache and the Countess du Romain and was a fine young fellow of an excellent disposition. He was never so well pleased as when he saw his mistress surrounded by people—a taste which is rarely found, but which is very convenient and the sign of a temperament not afflicted by jealousy. Camille had no other lovers, an astonishing thing in an actress of the kind, but, being full of tact and wit, she drove none of her admirers to despair. She was neither over-sparing nor over-generous in the distribution of her favours and knew how to make the whole town rave about her without fearing the result of indiscretion or the sorrows of being abandoned.

The gentleman of whom, after her lover, she took most notice was

the Count de la Tour d'Auvergne, a nobleman of an old family, who idolised her and, not being rich enough to possess her entirely, had to be content with what she gave him. Camille had given him a young girl, for whose keep she paid, who lived with La Tour d'Auvergne in furnished apartments in the Rue de Taranne and whom he said he loved as one loves a portrait because she came from Camille. The count often took her with him to Camille's to supper. She was fifteen, simple in her manners and quite devoid of ambition. She told her lover she would never forgive him an act of infidelity except with Camille, to whom she felt bound to yield all since to her she owed all.

I became so much in love with her that I often went to Camille's solely to see her and enjoy the artless speeches with which she delighted the company. I strove as best I could to conceal my flame, but often found myself looking quite sad at the thought of the impossibility of my love being crowned with success. If I had let my passion be suspected, I should have been laughed at and should have made myself a mark for the pitiless sarcasms of Camille. However, I got my cure in the following ridiculous manner:

Camille lived at the Barrière Blanche, and, on leaving her house one rainy evening, I sought in vain for a coach to take me home.

"My dear Casanova," said La Tour d'Auvergne, "I can drop you at your own door without giving myself the slightest inconvenience, though my carriage is seated for only two; however, my sweetheart can sit on our laps."

I accepted his offer with pleasure and we seated ourselves in the carriage, the count on my left hand and Babet on our laps.

Burning with amorous passion, I thought I would take the opportunity and, to lose no time, as the coachman was driving fast, I took her hand and pressed it softly. The pressure was returned. Joy! I carried the hand to my lips and covered it with affectionate though noiseless kisses. Longing to convince her of the ardour of my passion and thinking that her hand would not refuse to do me a sweet service I—but, just at the critical moment, "I am really very much obliged to you, my dear fellow," said the Count de la Tour d'Auvergne, "for a piece of politeness thoroughly Italian, of which, however, I do not feel worthy—at least, I hope it was not just a mistake."

At these dreadful words I extended my hand and felt the sleeve of his coat. Presence of mind was no good in a situation like this, when his words were followed by a peal of loud laughter which would have confounded the hardiest spirit. As for me, I could neither join in his laughter nor deny his accusation; the situation was a fearful one—or would have been if the friendly shades of night had not covered my confusion. Babet did her best to find out from the count why he laughed so much, but he could not tell her for laughing, for which I gave thanks with all my heart. At last the carriage stopped at my house, and, as soon as my servant had opened the door of the carriage, I got down as fast as I could and wished them good night—a compliment which La Tour d'Auvergne returned with fresh peals of laughter. I entered my

house in a state of stupefaction and half an hour elapsed before I, too, began to laugh at the adventure. What vexed me most was the expectation of having malicious jests passed upon me, for I had not the least right to reckon on the count's discretion. However, I had enough sense to determine to join in the laughter if I could and, if not, to take it well, for this is, and always will be, the best way to get the laughers on one's own side in Paris.

For three days I saw nothing of the delightful count, and on the fourth I resolved to ask him to take breakfast with me, as Camille had sent to my house to inquire how I was. My adventure would not prevent me visiting her house, but I was anxious to know how it had been taken.

As soon as La Tour d'Auvergne saw me he began to roar with laughter, and I joined in and we greeted each other in the friendliest manner possible. "My dear count," said I, "let us forget this foolish story. You have no business to attack me, as I do not know how to defend myself."

"Why should you defend yourself, my dear fellow? We like you all the better for it, and this humorous adventure makes us merry every evening."

"Everybody knows it, then?"

"Of course. Why not? It makes Camille choke with laughter. Come this evening; I will bring Babet and she will amuse you, as she maintains that you did not make a mistake."

"She is right."

"Eh? what? You do me too much honour, and I don't believe you; but have it as you like."

"I can't do better, but I must confess, when all's said, that you were not the person to whom my fevered imagination offered such ardent homage."

At supper I jested, pretended to be astonished at the count's indiscretion and boasted of being cured of my passion. Babet called me a villain and maintained that I was far from cured; but she was wrong, as the incident had disgusted me with her and had attached me to the count, who, indeed, was a man of the most amiable character. Nevertheless, our friendship might have been a fatal one, as the reader will see presently.

One evening, when I was at the Italian theatre, La Tour d'Auvergne came up and asked me to lend him a hundred louis, promising to repay me the next Saturday.

"I haven't got the money," I said, "but my purse and all it contains is at your service."

"I want a hundred louis, my dear fellow, and immediately, as I lost them at play yesterday evening at the Princess of Anhalt's."

"But I haven't got them."

"The receiver of the lottery ought always to be able to put his hand on a hundred louis."

"Yes, but I can't touch my cashbox; I have to give it up this day week."

"So you can, as I will repay you on Saturday. Take a hundred louis from the box and put in my word of honour instead; don't you think that is worth a hundred louis?"

"I have nothing to say to that; wait for me a minute."

I ran to my office, took out the money and gave it to him. Saturday came but no count, and, as I had no money, I pawned my diamond ring and replaced the hundred louis I owed the till. Three or four days afterwards, as I was at the Comédie-Française, the Count de la Tour d'Auvergne came up and began to apologise. I replied by showing my hand and telling him I had pawned my ring to save my honour. He said, with a melancholy air, that a man failed to keep his word with him, but he would be sure to give me the hundred louis on the Saturday following, adding, "I give you my word of honour."

"Your word of honour is in my box, so let's say nothing about that. You can repay me when you like."

The count grew as pale as death.

"My word of honour, my dear Casanova, is more precious to me than my life; and I will give you the hundred louis at nine o'clock to-morrow morning at a hundred paces from the café at the end of the Champs Elysées. I will give you them in person and nobody will see us, I hope you will not fail to be there and that you will bring your sword. I shall have mine."

"Faith! count, that's making me pay rather dear for my jest. You certainly do me a great honour, but I would rather beg your pardon if that would prevent this troublesome affair from going any further."

"No, I am more to blame than you and the blame can be removed only at the sword's point. Will you meet me?"

"I do not see how I can refuse you, although I am very much averse to the affair."

I left him and went to Silvia's and took my supper sadly, for I really liked this amiable nobleman and in my opinion the game we were going to play was not worth the candle. I would not have fought if I could have convinced myself that I was in the wrong, but, after turning the matter well over and looking at it from every point of view, I could not help seeing that the fault lay in the count's excessive touchiness, and I resolved to give him satisfaction. At all hazards I would not fail to keep the appointment. I reached the café a moment after him. We took breakfast together and he paid. We then went out and walked towards the Etoile. When we got to a sheltered place, he drew a bundle of a hundred louis from his pocket, gave it me with the greatest courtesy and said that one stroke of the sword would be sufficient. I could not reply.

He went off four paces and drew his sword. I did the same without saying a word and, stepping forward almost as soon as our blades crossed, I thrust and hit him. I drew back my sword and summoned

him to keep his word, feeling sure that I had wounded him in the chest.

He quietly lowered his sword and, putting his hand into his breast, drew it out covered with blood and said pleasantly to me, "I am satisfied."

I said to him all that I could and all that it was my duty to say in the way of compliment, while he was stanching the blood with his handkerchief, and, on looking at the point of my sword, I was delighted to find that the wound was of the slightest. I told him so, offering to see him home. He thanked me and begged me to keep my own counsel and to reckon him henceforth amongst my truest friends. After I had embraced him, mingling my tears with my embraces, I returned home, sad at heart but having learnt a most useful lesson. No one ever knew of our meeting and a week afterward we supped together at Camille's.

A few days after I received from M. de la Ville the five hundred louis for my Dunkirk mission. On my going to see Camille, she told me that La Tour d'Auvergne was kept in bed by an attack of sciatica and that, if I liked, we could pay him a visit the next day. I agreed and we went. After breakfast was over, I told him in a serious voice that, if he would give me a free hand, I could cure him, as he was not suffering from sciatica but from a moist and windy humour which I could disperse by means of the Talisman of Solomon and five mystic words. He began to laugh but told me to do what I liked.

"Very good, then; I will go out and buy a brush."

"I will send a servant."

"No, I must get it myself, as I want some drugs as well." I bought some nitre, mercury, flower of sulphur and a small brush.

I made a mixture of the various ingredients and told Camille she must rub his thigh whilst I spoke the charm, but I warned her that, if she laughed while she was about it, she would spoil all. This threat only increased their good humour and they laughed without cessation, for, as soon as they thought they had got over it, they would look at one another and, after repressing themselves as long as they could, would burst out afresh, till I began to think that I had bound them to an impossible condition. At last, after holding their sides for half an hour, they set themselves to be serious in real earnest, taking my imperturbable gravity for their example. La Tour d'Auvergne was the first to regain a serious face and he then offered Camille his thigh, and she, fancying herself on the boards, began to rub the sick man, whilst I mumbled in an undertone words which they would not have understood however clearly I had spoken, seeing that I did not understand them myself.

I was near spoiling the efficacy of the operation when I saw the grimaces they made in trying to keep serious. Nothing could be more amusing than the expression on Camille's face. At last I told her she had rubbed enough, and, dipping the brush into the mixture, I drew on his thigh the five-pointed star called "Solomon's Seal." I then wrapped up the thigh in three napkins and told him, if he would keep

quiet for twenty-four hours without taking off his napkins, I would guarantee a cure.

The most amusing part of it all was that, by the time I had done, the count and Camille laughed no more, their faces wore a bewildered look, and, as for me, I could have sworn I had performed the most wonderful work in the world. If one tells a lie a sufficient number of times, one ends by believing it.

A few minutes after this operation, which I had performed as if by instinct and on the spur of the moment, Camille and I went away in a coach, and I told her so many wonderful tales that, when she got out at her door, she looked quite amazed.

Four or five days after, when I had almost forgotten the farce, I heard a carriage stopping at my door and, looking out of my window, saw M. de la Tour d'Auvergne skipping nimbly out of the carriage.

"You were sure of success, then," said he, "as you did not come to see me the day after your astounding operation."

"Of course I was sure, but, if I had not been too busy, you would have seen me, for all that."

"May I take a bath?"

"No, don't bathe till you feel quite well."

"Very good. Everybody is in a state of astonishment at your feat, as I could not help telling the miracle to all my acquaintances. There are certainly some sceptics who laugh at me, but I let them talk."

"You should have kept your own counsel; you know what Paris is like. Everybody will be considering me as a master-quack."

"Not at all, not at all. I have come to ask a favour of you."

"What's that?"

"I have an aunt who enjoys a great reputation for her skill in the occult sciences, especially in alchemy. She is a woman of wit, very rich and sole mistress of her fortune—in short, knowing her will do you no harm. She longs to see you, for she claims she knows you and says that you are not what you seem. She has entreated me to bring you to dine with her, and I hope you will accept the invitation. Her name is the Marchioness d'Urfé."

I did not know this lady, but the name of d'Urfé caught my attention directly, as I knew all about the famous Anne d'Urfé who flourished towards the end of the seventeenth century. The lady was the widow of his great-grandson, and, on marrying into the family, became a believer in the mystical doctrines of a science in which I was much interested, though I gave it little credit. I therefore replied that I should be glad to go, but on the condition that the party should not exceed the count, his aunt and myself.

"She has twelve people every day to dinner and you will find yourself in the company of the best society in Paris."

"My dear fellow, that's exactly what I don't want; for I hate to be thought a magician, which must have been the effect of the tales you have told."

"Oh, no! not at all; your character is well known and you will find

yourself in the society of people who have the greatest regard for you."

"Are you sure of that?"

"The Duchess de l'Oraguais told me that, four or five years ago, you were often to be seen at the Palais Royal and that you used to spend whole days with the Duchesse d'Orléans; Madame de Boufflers, Madame de Blois and Madame de Melfort have also talked to me about you. You are wrong not to keep up your old acquaintances. I know at least a hundred people of the first rank who are suffering from the same malady as that of which you cured me and would give the half of their goods to be cured."

De la Tour d'Auvergne had reason on his side, but, as I knew his wonderful cure had been due to a singular coincidence, I had no desire to expose myself to public ridicule. I therefore told him that I did not wish to become a public character and that he must tell Madame d'Urfé I would have the honour of calling on her in strict privacy only and she might tell me the day and hour on which I should kneel before her.

The same evening I had a letter from the count making an appointment at the Tuileries for the morrow; he was to meet me there and take me to his aunt's to dinner. No one else was to be present.

The next day we met as had been arranged and went to see Madame d'Urfé, who lived on the Quai des Theatins, on the same side as the Hôtel Bouillon.

Madame d'Urfé, a woman advanced in years but still handsome, received me with all the courtly grace of the Court of the Regency. We spent an hour and a half in indifferent conversation, occupied in studying each other's character. Each was trying to get at the bottom of the other.

I had not much trouble in playing the part of the unenlightened, for such, in point of fact, was my state of mind, and Madame d'Urfé unconsciously betrayed the desire of showing her learning; this put me at my ease, for I felt sure I could make her pleased with me if I succeeded in making her pleased with herself.

At two o'clock the same dinner that was prepared every day for twelve was served for us three. Nothing worthy of note (so far as conversation went) occurred at dinner, as we talked commonplaces, after the manner of people of fashion.

After the dessert La Tour d'Auvergne left us to go and see the Prince de Turenne, who was in a high fever, and, after he was gone, Madame d'Urfé began to discuss alchemy and magic and all the other branches of her beloved science—or, rather, infatuation. When we got on the *magnum opus* and I asked her if she knew the nature of the first matter, it was only her politeness which prevented her from laughing; but, controlling herself, she replied graciously that she already possessed the philosopher's stone and was acquainted with all the operations of the work. She then showed me a collection of books which had belonged to the great d'Urfé and Renée of Savoy, his wife; but she had added to it manuscripts which had cost her more than a hundred thousand francs. Paracelsus was her favourite author, and, according

to her, he was neither man, woman nor hermaphrodite and had the misfortune to poison himself with an overdose of his panacea, or universal medicine. She showed me a short manuscript in French, where the great work was clearly explained. She told me that she did not keep it under lock and key because it was written in a cypher, the secret of which was known only to herself.

"You do not believe, then, in steganography."

"No, sir, and, if you would like it, I will give you this which has been copied from the original."

"I accept it, madame, with all the more gratitude in that I know its worth."

From the library we went into the laboratory, at which I was truly astonished. She showed me matter that had been in the furnace for fifteen years and was to be there for four or five years more. It was a powder of projection which was to transform instantaneously all metals into the finest gold. She showed me a pipe by which the coal descended to the furnace, keeping it always at the same heat. The lumps of coal were impelled by their own weight at proper intervals and in equal quantities, so that she was often three months without looking at the furnace, the temperature remaining the same the whole time. The cinders were removed by another pipe, most ingeniously contrived, which also answered the purpose of a ventilator.

The calcination of mercury was mere child's play to this wonderful woman. She showed me the calcined matter and said that, whenever I liked, she would instruct me as to the process. I next saw the Tree of Diana of the famous Taliamed, whose pupil she was. His real name was Maillot and, according to Madame d'Urfé, he had not, as was supposed, died at Marseilles but was still alive. "And," added she, with a slight smile, "I often get letters from him. If the Regent of France had listened to me, he would be alive now. He was my first friend; he gave me the name of Egeria and he married me to M. d'Urfé."

She possessed a commentary on Raymond Lully which cleared up all difficult points in the comments of Arnold de Villanova on the works of Roger Bacon and Heber, who, according to her, were still alive. This precious manuscript was in an ivory casket, the key of which she kept religiously; indeed her laboratory was a closed room to all but myself. I saw a small cask full of *platina del Pinto*, which she told me she could transmute into gold when she pleased. It had been given to her by M. Vood himself in 1743. She showed me the same metal in four phials. In the first three the platinum remained intact in sulphuric, nitric and muriatic acid, but in the fourth, which contained *aqua regia*, the metal had not been able to resist the action of the acid. She melted it with the burning-glass and said it could be melted in no other way, which proved, in her opinion, its superiority to gold. She showed me some precipitated by sal ammoniac, which would not precipitate gold.

Her *athanor* had been alight for fifteen years. The top was full of black coal, which made me conclude that she had been in the laboratory two or three days before. Stopping before the Tree of Diana, I asked

her, in a respectful voice, if she agreed with those who said it was fit only to amuse children. She replied in a dignified manner that she had made it to divert herself with the crystallisation of silver, spirit of nitre and mercury and that she looked upon it merely as a piece of metallic vegetation, representing on a small scale what nature performed on a larger one; but she added very seriously that she could make a Tree of Diana which would be a very Tree of the Sun, which would produce golden fruit that might be gathered and would continue to be produced till no more remained of a certain ingredient. I said modestly that I could not believe the thing possible without the powder of projection, but her only answer was a pleased smile.

She then pointed out a china basin containing nitre, mercury and sulphur and a fixed salt on a plate.

"You know the ingredients, I suppose?" said she.

"Yes; this fixed salt is a salt of urine."

"You are right."

"I admire your sagacity, madame. You have made an analysis of the mixture with which I traced the pentacle on your nephew's thigh; but in what way can you discover the words which give the pentacle its efficacy?"

"In the manuscript of an adept, which I will show you and where you will find the very words you used."

I bowed my head in reply and we left this curious laboratory.

We had scarcely arrived in her room before Madame d'Urfé drew from a handsome casket a little book, bound in black, which she put on the table while she searched for a match. While she was looking about, I opened the book behind her back and found it to be full of pentacles, and by good luck found the pentacle I had traced on the count's thigh. It was surrounded by the names of the spirits of the planets, with the exception of those of Saturn and Mars. I shut the book quickly. The spirits named were the same as those in the works of Agrippa, with which I was well acquainted. With an unmoved countenance I drew near her, and she soon found the match, and her appearance surprised me a good deal; but I will speak of that another time.

The marchioness sat down on her sofa and, making me to do the like, asked if I was acquainted with the talismans of the Count de Trèves.

"I had never heard of them, madame, but I know those of Polyphilus."

"It is said they are the same."

"I don't believe it."

"We shall see. If you will write the words you uttered as you drew the pentacle on my nephew's thigh and if I find the same talisman with the same words around it, the identity will be proved."

"It will, I confess. I will write the words immediately."

I wrote out the names of the spirits. Madame d'Urfé found the pentacle and read out the names, while I, pretending astonishment, gave her the paper and, much to her delight, she found the names to be the same.

"You see," said she, "that Polyphilus and the Count de Trèves possessed the same art."

"I shall be convinced that it is so if your book contains the manner of pronouncing the ineffable names. Do you know the theory of the planetary hours?"

"I think so, but they are not needed in this operation."

"They are indispensable, madame, for without them one cannot work with any certainty. I drew Solomon's pentacle on the thigh of Count de la Tour d'Auvergne in the hour of Venus, and, if I had not begun with Araël, the spirit of Venus, the operation would have had no effect."

"I did not know that. And after Araël?"

"Next comes Mercury, then the Moon, then Jupiter and then the Sun. It is, you see, the magic cycle of Zoroaster, in which Saturn and Mars are omitted."

"And how would you have proceeded if you had gone to work in the hour of the Moon?"

"I should have begun with Jupiter, passed to the Sun, then to Araël or Venus, and I should have finished at Mercury."

"I see, sir, that you are most apt in the calculation of the planetary hours."

"Without it one can do nothing in magic, as one would have no proper data; however, it is an easy matter to learn. Anyone could pick it up in a month's time. The practical use, however, is much more difficult than the theory; this, indeed, is a complicated affair. I never leave my house without ascertaining the exact number of minutes in the day, and take care that my watch is exact to the time, for a minute more or less would make all the difference in the world."

"Would you have the goodness to explain the theory to me?"

"You will find it in Artephius and more clearly in Sandivogius."

"I have both works, but they are in Latin."

"I will make you a translation of them."

"You are very kind; I shall be extremely obliged to you."

"I have seen such things here, madame, that I could not refuse, for reasons which I may perhaps tell you to-morrow."

"Why not to-day?"

"Because I ought to know the name of your familiar spirit before I tell you."

"You know, then, that I have a familiar? You should have one if it is true that you possess the powder of projection."

"I have one."

"Give me the oath of the order."

"I dare not, and you know why."

"Perhaps I shall be able to remove your fears by to-morrow."

This absurd oath was none other than that of the princes of the Rosy Cross, who never pronounce it without being certain that each party is a Rosicrucian, so Madame d'Urfé was quite right in her caution, and, as for me, I had to pretend to be afraid myself. The fact is, I wanted to gain time, for I knew perfectly well the nature of the oath.

It may be given between men without any indecency, but a woman like Madame d'Urfé would probably not relish giving it to a man whom she saw for the first time.

"When we find this oath alluded to in the *Holy Scriptures*," she said, "it is indicated by the words, 'he swore to him by laying his hand on his thigh.' But the thigh is not really what is meant, and consequently we never find any notice of a man taking this oath to a woman, as a woman has no *virga*."

The Count de la Tour d'Auvergne came back at nine o'clock in the evening and showed no little astonishment at seeing me still with his aunt. He told us that his cousin's fever had increased and that smallpox had declared itself. "And I am going to take leave of you, my dear aunt, at least for a month, as I intend to shut myself up with the sick man."

Madame d'Urfé praised his zeal and gave him a little bag on his promising to return it to her after the cure of the prince.

"Hang it round his neck and the eruption will come out well, and he will be perfectly cured."

He promised to do so and, having wished us good evening, went out.

"I do not know, madame, what your bag contains, but, if it have aught to do with magic, I have no confidence in its efficacy, as you have neglected to observe the planetary hour."

"It is an *electrum*, and magic and the observance of the hour have nothing to do with it."

"I beg your pardon."

She then said that she thought my desire for privacy praiseworthy, but she was sure I should not be ill-pleased with her small circle, if I would but enter it.

"I will introduce you to all my friends," she said, "by asking them one at a time, and you will then be able to enjoy the company of them all."

I accepted her proposition.

In consequence of this arrangement I dined the next day with M. Gérin and his niece, but neither of them took my fancy. The day after I dined with an Irishman named Macartney, a physician of the old school, who bored me terribly. The next day the guest was a monk who talked literature and spoke a thousand follies against Voltaire, whom I then much admired, and against the *Esprit des Lois*, a favourite work of mine, which the cowed idiot refused to attribute to Montesquieu, maintaining it had been written by a monk. He might as well have said that a Capuchin created the heavens and the earth.

On the day following Madame d'Urfé asked me to dine with the Chevalier d'Arzigny, a man upwards of eighty, vain, foppish and consequently ridiculous, known as "The Dean of the Dandies." However, as he had moved in the court of Louis XIV, he was interesting enough, speaking with all the courtesy of the school and having a fund of anecdote relating to the court of that despotic and luxurious monarch.

His follies amused me greatly. He used rouge, his clothes were cut

in the style which obtained in the days of Madame de Sévigné, he professed himself still the devoted lover of his mistress, with whom he supped every night in the company of his lady friends, who were all young and all delightful and preferred his society to all others; however, in spite of these seductions, he remained faithful to his mistress.

The Chevalier d'Arzigny had an amiability of character which gave whatever he said an appearance of truth, although in his capacity of courtier truth was probably quite unknown to him. He was exquisitely neat in his dress. He always wore a bouquet of the most strongly smelling flowers, such as tuberose, jonquils and Spanish jasmine; his wig was plastered down with amber-scented pomade, his teeth were made of ivory and his eyebrows dyed and perfumed, and his whole person exhaled an odour to which Madame d'Urfé did not object but which I could scarcely bear. If it had not been for this drawback, I should probably have cultivated his society. He was a professed Epicurean and carried out the system with an amazing tranquillity. He said that he would undertake to receive twenty-four blows with the stick every morning, on condition that he should not die within the twenty-four hours, and that, the older he grew, the more blows he would gladly submit to. This was being in love with life with a vengeance.

Another day I dined with M. Charon, who was a counsellor and in charge of a suit between Madame d'Urfé and her daughter, Madame du Châtelet, whom she disliked heartily. The old counsellor had been the favoured lover of the marchioness forty years before and thought himself bound by the remembrance of their love passages to support the cause of his old sweetheart. In those days French magistrates thought they had a right to take the side of their friends or of persons in whom they had an interest, sometimes for friendship's sake and sometimes for a monetary consideration; they thought, in fact, that they were justified in selling justice.

M. Charon bored me like the others, as was natural, considering we had no two tastes in common.

The scene was changed the next day when I was amused with the company of M. de Viarme, a young counsellor, a nephew of Madame d'Urfé, and his pretty and charming wife. He was the author of the *Remonstrances to the King*, a work which got him a great reputation and had been read eagerly by the whole town. He told me that the business of a counsellor was to oppose everything done by the Crown, good and bad. His reasons for this theory were those given by all minorities, and I do not think I need trouble my readers with them.

The most enjoyable dinner I had was with Madame de Gergi, who came with the famous adventurer, known by the name of the Count de St. Germain. This individual, instead of eating, talked from the beginning of the meal to the end, and I followed his example in one respect, as I did not eat, but listened to him with the greatest attention. It may safely be said that, as a conversationalist, he was unequalled.

St. Germain gave himself out for a marvel and always aimed at exciting amazement, which he often succeeded in doing. He was scholar,

linguist, musician and chemist, good-looking and a perfect ladies' man. For a while he gave them paints and cosmetics; he flattered them, not that he would make them young again (which he modestly confessed was beyond him) but that their beauty would be preserved by means of a wash which, he said, cost him a lot of money but which he gave away freely.

He had contrived to gain the favour of Madame de Pompadour, who had spoken about him to the King, for whom he had made a laboratory in which the monarch, a martyr to boredom, tried to find a little pleasure—or distraction, at all events—by making dyes. The King had given him a suite of rooms at Chambord and a hundred thousand francs for the construction of a laboratory, and, according to St. Germain, the dyes discovered by the King would have a materially beneficial influence on the quality of French fabrics.

This extraordinary man, intended by nature to be the king of impostors and quacks, would say in an easy, assured manner that he was three hundred years old, that he knew the secret of the Universal Medicine, that he possessed a mastery over nature, that he could melt diamonds, professing himself capable of forming, out of ten or twelve small diamonds, one large one of the finest water without any loss of weight. All this, he said, was a mere trifle to him. Notwithstanding his boastings, his barefaced lies and his manifold eccentricities, I cannot say I thought him offensive. In spite of my knowledge of what he was and in spite of my own feelings, I thought him an astonishing man, as he was always astonishing me. I shall have something more to say of this character further on.

When Madame d'Urfé had introduced me to all her friends, I told her I would dine with her whenever she wished, but that, with the exception of her relatives and St. Germain, whose wild talk amused me, I should prefer her to invite no company. St. Germain often dined with the best society in the capital, but he never ate anything, saying that he was kept alive by mysterious food known only to himself. One soon got used to his eccentricities, but not to his wonderful flow of words, which made him the soul of whatever company he was in.

By this time I had fathomed all the depths of Madame d'Urfé's character. She firmly believed me to be an adept of the first order, making use of another name for purposes of my own; and five or six weeks later she was confirmed in this wild idea on her asking me if I had deciphered the manuscript which claimed to explain the *Magnum Opus*.

"Yes," said I, "I have deciphered it and consequently read it, and I now beg to return it to you with my word of honour that I have not made a copy; in fact, I found nothing in it that I did not know before."

"Without the key, you mean; but, of course, you could never find out that."

"Shall I tell you the key?"

"Pray do so."

I gave her the word, which belonged to no language that I know of, and the marchioness was quite thunderstruck.

"This is too amazing," said she. "I thought myself the sole possessor of that mysterious word, for I had never written it down, laying it up in my memory, and I am sure I have never told anyone of it."

I might have informed her that the calculation which enabled me to decipher the manuscript furnished me also with the key, but the whim took me to tell her that a spirit had revealed it to me. This foolish tale completed my mastery over this woman, truly learned and sensible on everything but her hobby. This false confidence gave me an immense ascendancy over Madame d'Urfé, and I often abused my power over her. Now that I am no longer the victim of those illusions which pursued me throughout my life, I blush at the remembrance of my conduct, and the penance I impose on myself is to tell the whole truth, and to extenuate nothing in these *Memoirs*.

The wildest notion in the good marchioness's brain was a firm belief in the possibility of communication between mortals and elementary spirits. She would have given all her goods to attain such communication and she had several times been deceived by impostors who made her believe that she had attained her aim.

"I did not think," said she, sadly, "that your spirit would be able to force mine to reveal my secrets."

"There was no need to force your spirit, madame, as mine knows all things of his own power."

"Does he know the inmost secrets of my soul?"

"Certainly, and, if I ask him, he is forced to disclose all to me."

"Can you ask him when you like?"

"Oh, yes! provided I have paper and ink. I can even ask him questions through you by telling you his name."

"And will you tell it me?"

"I can do what I say; and, to convince you, his name is *Paralis*. Ask him a simple question in writing, as you would ask a common mortal. Ask him, for instance, how I deciphered your manuscript, and you shall see I will compel him to answer you."

Trembling with joy, Madame d'Urfé put her question, expressed it in numbers, then, following my method, in pyramid shape; and I made her extract the answer, which she wrote down in letters. At first she obtained only consonants, but, by a second process which supplied the vowels, she received a clear and sufficient answer. Her every feature expressed astonishment, for she had drawn from the pyramid the word which was the key to her manuscript. I left her, carrying with me her heart, her soul, her mind, and all the common sense which she had left.

CHAPTER 59

By the time the Prince de Turenne had recovered from the smallpox and the Count de la Tour d'Auvergne had left him, the latter, knowing

his aunt's taste for the occult sciences, was not surprised to find me become her confidant and most intimate friend.

I was glad to see him and all the relatives of the marchioness at dinner, as I was delighted with the courtesy with which they treated me. I am referring more especially to her brothers. MM. de Pont-Carré and de Viarme, who had lately been chosen head of the trade companies, and his son. I have already spoken of Madame du Châtelet, the marchioness's daughter, but an unlucky lawsuit separated them and she no longer formed one of the family circle.

La Tour d'Auvergne having been obliged to rejoin his regiment which was in garrison in Brittany, the marchioness and I dined together almost every day and people looked upon me as her husband, and, despite the improbability of the supposition, this was the only way in which they could account for the long hours we spent together. Madame d'Urfé thought I was rich and looked upon my position at the lottery as a mere device for preserving my *incognito*.

I was the possessor, in her estimation, not only of the philosopher's stone but also of the power of speaking with the whole host of elementary spirits, from which premises she drew the very logical deduction that I could turn the world upside down if I liked and be the blessing or the plague of France; and she thought my object in remaining *incognito* was to guard myself from arrest and imprisonment, which according to her would be the inevitable result of the minister's discovering my real character. These wild notions were the fruit of the nocturnal revelations of her genius, that is, of the dreams of her disordered spirit, which seemed to her realities. She did not seem to think that, if I was endowed as she supposed, no one would have been able to arrest me, in the first place because I should have had the knowledge of the attempt, and in the second place because my power would have been too strong for all bolts and bars. All this was clear enough, but strong passion and prejudice cannot reason.

One day, in the course of conversation, she said, with the utmost seriousness, that her genius had advised her that not even I had power to give her speech with the spirits, since she was a woman, and the genii communicated only with men, whose nature is more perfect. Nevertheless, by a process which was well known to me, I might make her soul pass into the body of a male child born of the mystic connection between an immortal man and a mortal woman, or between an ordinary man and a woman of a divine nature.

If I had thought it possible to lead Madame d'Urfé back to the right use of her senses, I would have made the attempt, but I felt sure that her disease was without remedy, and the only course before me seemed to abet her in her ravings and to profit by them.

If I had spoken out like an honest man and told her that her theories were nonsensical, she would not have believed me; she would have thought me jealous of her knowledge, and I should have lost her favour without any gain to her or to myself. I thus let things take their course, and, to speak the truth, I was flattered to see myself treated as one

of the most profound brothers of the Rosy Cross, as the most powerful of men, by so distinguished a lady, who was in high repute for her learning, who entertained and was related to the first families of France and had an income of eighty thousand francs, a splendid estate and several magnificent houses in Paris. I was quite sure that she would refuse me nothing and, though I had no definite plan of profiting by her wealth, I experienced a certain pleasure at the thought that I could do so if I would.

In spite of her immense fortune and her belief in her ability to make gold, Madame d'Urfé was miserly in her habits, for she never spent more than thirty thousand francs in a year, and she invested her savings on the Exchange and in this way had nearly doubled them. A brother used to buy government securities for her at their lowest rate and sell at their rise, and in this manner, being able to wait for their rise and fall, she had amassed a considerable sum.

She had told me more than once that she would give all she possessed to become a man and that she knew I could do this for her if I would. One day, as she was speaking to me on this subject in a tone of persuasion almost irresistible, I told her that I must confess I had the power to do what she wanted, but could not make up my mind to perform the operation upon her, as I should have to kill her first. I thought this would effectually check her wish to go any further, but what was my surprise to hear her say, "I know that and, what is more, I know the death I shall have to die; but, for all that, I am ready."

"What, then, is that death, madame?"

"It is by the same poison which killed Paracelsus."

"Do you think that Paracelsus obtained the hypostasis?"

"No, but I know the reason of his not doing so."

"What is the reason?"

"It is that he was neither man nor woman, and a composite nature is incapable of the hypostasis, to obtain which one must be either the one or the other."

"Very true, but do you know how to make the poison and that the thing is impossible without the aid of a salamander?"

"That may or may not be. I beseech you to inquire of the oracle whether there be anyone in Paris in possession of this potion."

It was easy to see that she thought herself in possession of it, so I had no hesitation in extracting her name from the oracular pyramid. I pretended to be astonished at the answer, but she said, boastfully:

"You see that all we need is a male child born of an immortal. This, I am advised, will be provided by you, and I do not think you will be found wanting out of a foolish pity for this poor old body of mine."

At these words I rose and went to the window, where I stayed for more than a quarter of an hour reflecting on her infatuation. When I returned to the table where she was seated, she scanned my features attentively and said, with much emotion:

"Can it be done, my dear friend? I see that you have been weeping."

I did not try to undeceive her and, taking my sword and hat, took leave of her sadly. Her carriage, which was always at my disposal, was at the door and I drove to the Boulevards, where I walked till the evening, wondering all the while at the extraordinary fantasies of the marchioness.

My brother had been made a member of the Academy on the exhibition of a battle piece which had taken all the critics by storm. The picture was purchased by the Academy for five hundred louis.

He had fallen in love with Caroline and would have married her but for a piece of infidelity on her part which so enraged him that, a week after, he married an Italian dancer. M. de Canci, the ecclesiastical commissioner, gave the wedding party. He was fond of the girl and, out of gratitude to my brother for marrying her, he got him numerous orders among his friends, which paved the way to the large fortune and high repute which my brother afterwards attained.

M. Corneman, the banker, who was at my brother's wedding, spoke to me at considerable length on the great dearth of money and asked me to discuss the matter with the comptroller-general.

He told me that one might dispose of government securities to an association of brokers at Amsterdam and take in exchange the securities of any other country whose credit was higher than that of France and that these securities could easily be realised. I begged him to say no more about it and promised to see what I could do.

The plan pleased me and I turned it over all night; and the next day I went to the Palais Bourbon to discuss the question with M. de Bernis. He thought the whole idea an excellent one and advised me to go to Holland with a letter from M. de Choiseul for M. d'Affri, the ambassador at The Hague. He thought that the first person I should consult was M. de Boulogne, with whom he warned me to appear as if I was sure of my ground.

"As you do not require money in advance," said he, "you will be able to get as many letters of recommendation as you like."

The same day I went to the comptroller-general, who approved of my plan and told me that M. le Duc de Choiseul would be at the Invalides the next day and that I should speak to him at once and take a letter he would write for me.

"For my part," said he, "I will credit our ambassador with twenty millions and if, contrary to my hopes, you do not succeed, the paper can be sent back to France."

I answered that there would be no question of the paper being returned if they would be content with a fair price.

"The margin will be a small one; however, you will hear about that from the ambassador, who will have full instructions."

I felt so flattered by this mission that I passed the night in thinking it over. The next day I went to the Invalides, and M. de Choiseul, so famous for taking decisive action, had no sooner read M. de Boulogne's letter and spoken a few words to me on the subject, than he got me

to write a letter for M. d'Arfi, which he signed, sealed and returned to me, wishing me a prosperous journey.

I immediately got a passport from M. de Berkenrode and the same day took leave of Madame Baletti and all my friends except Madame d'Urfé, with whom I was to spend the whole of the next day. I gave my clerk at the lottery office full authority to sign all tickets.

About a month before, a girl from Brussels, as excellent as she was pretty, had been married under my auspices to an Italian named Gaetan, by trade a broker. This fellow, in his fits of jealousy, used to ill-treat her shamefully. I had reconciled them several times already and they regarded me as a kind of go-between. They came to see me on the day on which I was making my preparations for going to Holland. My brother and Tiretta were with me and, as I was still living in furnished apartments, I took them all to Laudel's, where they served an excellent dinner. Tiretta drove his coach-and-four; he was ruining his ex-Jansenist, who was still desperately in love with him.

In the course of dinner Tiretta, who was always in high spirits and loved a jest, began to flirt with the girl, whom he saw for the first time. She, who neither meant nor suspected any evil, was quite at her ease, and we should have enjoyed the joke and everything would have gone on pleasantly if her husband had possessed some modicum of manners and common sense, but he began to get into a perfect fury of jealousy. He ate nothing, changed colour ten times in a minute and looked daggers at his wife, as much as to say he did not see the joke. To crown all, Tiretta began to crack jests at the poor wretch's expense, and I, foreseeing unpleasantness, endeavoured, though all in vain, to moderate his high spirits and his sallies. An oyster chanced to fall on Madame Gaetan's beautiful breast, and Tiretta, who was sitting near her, took it up with his lips as quick as lightning. Gaetan was mad with rage and gave his wife such a furious box on the ear that his hand passed on from her cheek to her neighbour's. Tiretta, now as enraged as Gaetan, took him by the middle and threw him down, where, having no arms, he defended himself with kicks and fisticuffs, till the waiter came and we put him out of the room.

The poor wife, in tears and, like Tiretta, bleeding at the nose, besought me to take her away somewhere, as she feared her husband would kill her if she returned to him. So, leaving Tiretta with my brother, I got into a carriage with her and took her, according to her request, to her kinsman, an old attorney who lived in the fourth story of a house in the Quai de Gèvres. He received us politely and, after having heard the tale, said, "I am a poor man and can do nothing for this unfortunate girl, while, if I had a hundred crowns, I could do everything."

"Don't let that stand in your way," said I and, drawing three hundred francs from my pockets, I gave him the money.

"Now, sir," said he, "I will be the ruin of her husband, who shall never know where his wife is."

She thanked me and I left her there; the reader shall hear what became of her when I return from my journey.

On my informing Madame d'Urfé that I was going to Holland for the good of France and that I should be coming back at the beginning of February, she begged me to take charge of some shares of hers and sell them for her. They amounted in value to sixty thousand francs, but she could not dispose of them on the Paris Exchange owing to the tightness in the money market. In addition, she could not obtain the interest due to her, which had mounted up considerably, as she had not had a dividend for three years.

I agreed to sell the shares for her, but it was necessary for me to be constituted depository and owner of the property by a deed, which was executed the same day before a notary, to whose office we both went.

On returning to her house, I wished to give an I O U for the moneys, but she would not hear of such a thing and I let her remain satisfied of my honesty.

I called on M. Corneman, who gave me a bill of exchange for three hundred florins on M. Boaz, a Jewish banker at The Hague, and I then set out on my journey. I reached Antwerp in two days and, finding a yacht ready to start, I got on board and arrived at Rotterdam the next day. I got to The Hague on the day following and, after depositing my effects at the Hôtel d'Angleterre, proceeded to M. d'Afri's and found him reading M. de Choiseul's letter, which informed him of my business. He asked me to dine in his company and that of the ambassador of the King of Poland, who encouraged me to proceed in my undertaking, though he had not much opinion of my chances of success.

Leaving the ambassador, I went to see Boaz, whom I found at table in the midst of a numerous and ugly family. He read my letter and told me he had just received a letter from M. Corneman in which I was highly commended to him. By way of a joke he said that, as it was Christmas Eve, he supposed I should be going to rock the infant Jesus asleep, but I answered that I was come to keep the Feast of Maccabees with him—a reply which gained me the applause of the whole family and an invitation to stay with them. I accepted the offer without hesitation and told my servant to fetch my baggage from the hotel. Before leaving the banker, I asked him to show me some way of making twenty thousand florins in the short time I was going to stay in Holland.

Taking me quite seriously, he replied that the thing might easily be done and that he would think it over.

The next morning after breakfast, Boaz said, "I have solved your problem, sir; come in here and I will tell you about it."

He took me into his private office and, after counting out three thousand florins in notes of gold, he told me that, if I liked, I could undoubtedly make the twenty thousand florins I had spoken of. Much surprised at the ease with which money might be got in Holland, as

I had been merely jesting in the remarks I had made, I thanked him for his kindness and listened to his explanation.

"Look at this note," said he, "which I received this morning from the Mint. It informs me that an issue of four hundred thousand ducats is about to be made which will be disposed of at the current rate of gold, which is fortunately not high just now. Each ducat will fetch five florins, two stivers and three-fifths. This is the rate of exchange with Frankfort. Buy in four hundred thousand ducats, take them or send them to Frankfort with bills of exchange on Amsterdam and your business is done. On every ducat you will make a stiver and one-ninth, which comes to twenty-two thousand, two hundred and twenty-two of our florins. Get hold of the gold to-day and in a week you will have your clear profit. That's my idea."

"But," said I, "will the clerks of the Mint trust me with such a sum?"

"Certainly not, unless you pay them in current money or in good paper."

"My dear sir, I have neither money nor credit to that amount."

"Then you will certainly never make twenty thousand florins in a week. By the way you talked yesterday I took you for a millionaire."

"I am very sorry you were so mistaken."

"I shall get one of my sons to transact the business to-day."

After giving me this rather sharp lesson, M. Boaz went into his office and I went to dress.

M. d'Afri had paid his call on me at the Hôtel d'Angleterre and, not finding me there, he had written me a letter asking me to come and see him. I did so and he kept me to dinner, showing me a letter he had received from M. de Boulogne, in which he was instructed not to let me dispose of the twenty millions at a greater loss than eight per cent, as peace was imminent. We both of us laughed at this calm confidence of the Parisian minister, while we who were in a country where people saw deeper into affairs knew that the truth was quite otherwise.

On M. d'Afri's hearing that I was staying with a Jew, he advised me to keep my own counsel when with Jews, "because," said he, "in business 'most honest' and 'least knavish' mean pretty much the same thing. If you like," he added, "I will give you a letter of introduction to M. Pels, of Amsterdam." I accepted his offer with gratitude and, in the hope of his being useful to me in the matter of my foreign shares, he introduced me to the Swedish ambassador, who sent me to M. d'O—.

Wanting to be present at a great festival of Freemasons on St. John's Day, I remained at The Hague till the day after the celebration. The Comte de Tot, brother of the baron, who lost all his money at the seraglio and whom I had met again at The Hague, introduced me. I was not sorry to be in company with all the best society in Holland.

M. d'Afri introduced me to the mother of the Stadtholder, who

was only twelve and whom I thought too grave for his years. His mother was a worthy, patient kind of a woman, who fell asleep every minute, even while she was speaking. She died shortly after and it was discovered at the post-mortem examination that she had a disease of the brain which caused her extreme propensity to sleep. Beside her I saw Count Philip de Zinzendorf, who was looking for twelve millions for the Empress, a task which was not very difficult, as he offered five per cent interest.

At the play I found myself sitting next to the Turkish minister and I thought he would die with laughter before my eyes. It happened thus:

They were playing *Iphigenia*, that masterpiece of Racine's. The statue of Diana stood in the midst of the stage, and at the end of one act Iphigenia and her train of priestesses, while passing before it, all made a profound bow to the goddess. The candle-snuffer, a good Christian Dutchman and perhaps a practical joker, crossed the stage just afterwards and likewise bowed to the goddess. Peals of laughter sounded from all parts of the house. All this had to be explained to the Turk, and he fell into such a fit of laughter that I thought he would burst. At last he was carried to his inn, still laughing but almost senseless.

To have taken no notice of the Dutchman's heavy wit would have been, I confess, a mark of stupidity, but no one but a Turk could have laughed like that. It may be said that a Greek philosopher died of laughter at seeing a toothless old woman trying to eat figs. But there is a great difference between a Turk and a Greek, especially an ancient Greek.

Those who laugh a good deal are more fortunate than those who do not laugh at all, as laughter is good for the digestion, but there is a just mean in everything.

When I had gone two leagues from Amsterdam in my posting-chaise on two wheels, my servant sitting beside me, I met a carriage on four wheels, drawn like mine by two horses and containing a fine-looking young man and his servant. His coachman called out to mine to make way for him. My coachman answered that, if he did, he might turn me into the ditch, but the other insisted on it. I spoke to the master, begging him to tell his coachman to make way for me.

"I am posting, sir," said I, "and, moreover, I am a foreigner."

"Sir," answered he, "in Holland we take no notice of posting or not posting; and, if you are a foreigner, as you say, you must confess that you have fewer rights than I who am in my own country."

The blood rushed to my face. I flung open the door with one hand and took my sword with the other and, leaping into the snow, which was up to my knees, drew my sword and summoned the Dutchman to give way or defend himself. He was cooler than I and replied, smiling, that he was not going to fight for so foolish a cause and that I might get into the carriage again, as he would make way for me.

I was somewhat interested in his cool but pleasant manner. I got back into my chaise and the next night reached Amsterdam.

I put up at the excellent inn, L'Etoile d'Orient, and in the morning went on 'Change and found M. Pels. He told me he would think my business over and, finding M. d'O— directly afterwards, the latter put me in touch with a broker who offered to do me my sixteen bills and give me twelve per cent. M. Pels told me to wait, as he said he could get me fifteen per cent. He asked me to dinner and, on my admiring his Cape wine, told me with a laugh that he had made it himself by mixing Bordeaux and Malaga.

M. d'O— asked me to dinner on the day following, and, on calling, I found him with his daughter Esther, a young lady of fourteen, well-developed for her age and exquisite in all respects except her teeth, which were somewhat irregular. M. d'O— was a widower and had this only child; consequently Esther was heiress to a large fortune. Her excellent father loved her blindly and she deserved his love. Her skin was snow-white, delicately tinted with red; her hair was black as ebony, and she had the most beautiful eyes I have ever seen. She made an impression on me. Her father had given her an excellent education; she spoke French perfectly, played the piano admirably and was passionately fond of reading.

After dinner M. de'O— showed me the uninhabited part of the house, for, since the death of his wife, whose memory was dear to him, he lived on the ground floor only. He showed me a set of rooms where he kept a treasure in the way of old pottery. The walls and windows were covered with plates of marble, each room a different colour, and the floors were of mosaic, with Persian carpets. The dining-hall was cased in alabaster and the table and the cupboard were of cedar wood. The whole house looked like a block of solid marble, for it was covered with marble without as well as within and must have cost immense sums. Every Saturday half a dozen servant girls, perched on ladders, washed down these splendid walls. These girls wore wide hoops, being obliged to put on breeches, as otherwise they would have interested the passers-by in an unseemly manner.

After looking at the house, we went down again and M. d'O— left me alone with Esther in the ante-chamber, where he worked with his clerks. As it was New Year's Day, there was no business going on.

After playing a sonata, Mlle. d'O— asked me if I would go to a concert. I replied that, being in her company, nothing could make me stir. "But would you, mademoiselle, like to go?"

"Yes, I should like to go very well, but I cannot go by myself."

"If I might presume to offer to escort you... but I dare not think you would accept."

"I should be delighted and, if you were to ask my father, I am sure he would not refuse his permission."

"Are you sure of that?"

"Quite sure, for otherwise he would be guilty of impoliteness and

my father would not do such a thing. But I see you don't know the manners of the country."

"I confess I do not."

"Young ladies enjoy great liberty here, liberty which they lose only by marrying. Go and ask and you will see."

I went to M. d'O— and made my request, trembling lest I should meet with a refusal.

"Have you a carriage?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then I need not give orders to get mine ready. Esther!"

"Yes, father."

"Go and dress, my dear; M. Casanova has been kind enough to offer to take you to the concert."

"How good of him! Thank you, papa, for letting me go."

She threw her arms around his neck, ran to dress and reappeared an hour after, as fair as the joy which was expressed on her every feature. I could have wished she had used a little powder, but Esther was jealous of her ebon tresses, which displayed the whiteness of her skin to admiration. The chief aim of women in making their toilette is to please men, but how poor is the judgment of most men in such matters, compared to the unerring instinct of the generality of women!

A beautiful lace kerchief veiled her bosom, whose glories made my heart beat faster.

We went down the stair, I helped her into the carriage and stopped, thinking she would be accompanied by one of her women; but, seeing nobody, I got in myself. The door was shut and we were off. I was overwhelmed with astonishment. A treasure like this in my keeping! I could hardly think. I asked myself whether I was to remember that I was a free lance of love, or whether honour bade me forget it. Esther, in the highest spirits, told me that we were going to hear an Italian singer whose voice was exquisite, and, noticing my confusion, she asked what was the matter. I did not know what to say and began to stammer out something, but at last succeeded in saying that she was a treasure of whom I was not worthy to be the keeper.

"I know that in other countries a young girl would not be trusted alone with a gentleman, but here they teach us discretion and how to look after ourselves."

"Happy the man who is charged with your welfare, and happier still he on whom your choice has fallen!"

"That choice is not for me to make; 'tis my father's business."

"But supposing your father's choice is not pleasing to you, or supposing you love another?"

"We are not allowed to love a man until we know he is to be our husband."

"Then you are not in love with anyone?"

"No, and I have never felt the desire to love."

"Then I may kiss your hand?"

"Why should you kiss my hand?"

She drew away her hand and offered me her lovely lips. I took a kiss, which she gave modestly enough but which went to my heart. My delight was a little alloyed when she said that she would give me another kiss before her father whenever I liked.

We reached the concert room, where Esther found many of her young friends, all daughters of rich merchants, some pretty, some plain and all curious to know who I was. The fair Esther, who knew no more than my name, could not satisfy them. All at once, seeing a fair young girl a little way off, she pointed her out to me and asked my opinion of her. Naturally enough I replied that I did not care for fair girls.

"All the same, I must introduce you to her, for she may be a relative of yours. Her name is the same; that is her father over there."

"M. Casanova," said she, speaking to a gentleman, "I beg to introduce to you M. Casanova, a friend of my father's."

"Really? I would, sir, you might be my friend also, as we are, perhaps, related! I belong to the Naples branch."

"Then we are related, though distantly, as my father came from Parma. Have you your pedigree?"

"I ought to have such a thing, but, to tell you the truth, I don't think much of such matters. *Besants d'or* and such heraldic moneys are not currency in a mercantile republic."

"Pedigree-hunting is certainly a somewhat foolish pursuit, but it may nevertheless afford us a few minutes' amusement without our making any parade of our ancestry."

"With all my heart."

"I shall have the honour of calling on you to-morrow, and I will bring my family tree with me. Will you be vexed if you find the root of your family also?"

"Not at all; I shall be delighted. I will call on you myself to-morrow. May I ask if you are a business man?"

"No, I am a financial agent in the employ of the French ministry. I am staying with M. Pels."

M. Casanova beckoned to his daughter and introduced me to her. She was Esther's dearest friend, and I sat down between them and the concert began.

After a fine symphony, a concerto for the violin, another for the hautbois, the Italian singer whose repute was so great, and who was styled Madame Trenti, made her appearance. What was my surprise when I recognized in her Thérèse Imer, wife of the dancer Pompeati, whose name the reader may remember. I had made her acquaintance eighteen years before, when the old senator Malipiero struck me because we were playing together. I had seen her again in Venice in 1753, and then our pastime had been of a more serious nature. She had gone to Bayreuth, where she had been the Margrave's mistress. I had promised to go and see her but C— C— and my fair nun M— M— had left me neither the time nor the wish to do so. Soon after I was put under The Leads and then I had other things to think

about. I was sufficiently self-controlled not to show my astonishment, and listened to an aria which she was singing with her exquisite voice, beginning "*Eccoti venuta alfin, donna infelice*," words which seemed made for the case.

The applause seemed as if it would never come to an end. Esther told me it was not known who she was, but that she was said to be a woman with a history and to be very badly off. "She goes from one town to another, singing at all the public concerts, and all she receives is what those present choose to give her on a plate which she takes round."

"Does she find that that pays?"

"I should suspect not, as everyone has paid already on coming in. She cannot get more than thirty or forty florins. The day after tomorrow she will go to The Hague, then to Rotterdam, then back here again. She has been performing for six months and is always well received."

"Has she a lover?"

"She is said to have lovers in every town but, instead of enriching her, they make her poorer. She always wears black, not only because she is a widow, but also on account of a great grief she is reported to have gone through. She will soon be coming round." I took out my purse and counted out twelve ducats, which I wrapped in paper, my heart beating all the while in a ridiculous manner, for I had really nothing to be excited about.

When Thérèse was going along the seats in front of me, I glanced at her for an instant and saw that she looked surprised. I turned my head to speak to Esther and, when Thérèse was directly in front of me, I put my little packet on the plate without looking at her and she passed on. A little girl, four or five years old, followed her and, when she got to the end of the bench, she came back to kiss my hand. I could not help recognising in her a facsimile of myself, but I concealed my emotion. The child stood still and gazed at me fixedly, to my no small embarrassment. "Would you like some sweets, my dear?" said I, giving her my box, which I should have been glad to turn into gold. The little girl took it smilingly, made me a curtsy and went on.

"Does it strike you, M. Casanova," said Esther, with a laugh, "that you and that little girl are like each other as two peas?"

"Yes, indeed," added Mlle. Casanova, "there is a striking likeness."

"These resemblances are often the work of chance."

"Just so," said Esther, with a wicked smile, "but you admit a likeness, don't you?"

"I confess I was struck with it, though of course I cannot judge so well as you."

After the concert, M. d'O— arrived and, giving back his daughter to his care, I betook myself to my lodging. I was just sitting down to a dish of oysters, before going to bed, when Thérèse made her appearance, holding her child by the hand. Although I had not expected

her to visit me that evening, I was nevertheless not much surprised to see her. I, of course, rose to greet her when all at once she fell fainting on the sofa, though whether the fainting fit was real or assumed I cannot say. Thinking that she might be really ill, I played my part properly and brought her to herself by sprinkling her with cold water and putting my vinaigrette to her nose. As soon as she came to herself, she began to gaze at me without saying a word. At last, tired of her silence, I asked her if she would take any supper and, on her replying in the affirmative, I rang the bell and ordered a good supper for three, which kept us at the table till seven o'clock in the morning, talking over our various fortunes and misfortunes. She was already acquainted with most of my recent adventures, but I knew nothing at all about hers and she entertained me with a recital of them for five or six hours.

Sophie, the little girl, slept in my bed till day, and her mother, keeping the best of her tale to the last, told me that she was my daughter and showed me her baptismal certificate. The birth of the child fell in with the period at which I had been intimate with Thérèse, and her perfect likeness to myself left no room for doubt. I therefore raised no objections, but told the mother that I was persuaded of my paternity and that, being in a position to give the child a good upbringing, I was ready to be a father to her.

"She is too precious a treasure in my sight; if we were separated, I should die."

"You are wrong; for, if I took charge of the little girl, I should see that she was well provided for."

"I have a son of twelve to whom I cannot give a proper education; take charge of him instead of Sophie."

"Where is he?"

"He is boarding, or rather in pawn, at Rotterdam."

"What do you mean by 'in pawn'?"

"I mean that he will not be returned to me until I pay all I owe to the person who has got him."

"How much do you owe?"

"Eighty florins. You have already given me sixty-two, give me four ducats more; you can then take my son and I shall be the happiest of mothers. I will send him to you at The Hague next week, as I think you will be there."

"Yes, my dear Thérèse; and instead of four ducats, here are twenty."

"We shall see each other again at The Hague."

She was grateful to excess, but I felt only pity for her and a sort of friendly interest and kept quite cool, despite the ardour of her embraces. Seeing that her efforts were of no avail, she sighed, shed some tears and, taking her daughter, bade me adieu, promising once more to send me her son.

Thérèse was two years older than I. She was still pretty, even handsome, but her charms no longer retained their beauty, and my passion for her having been a merely physical one, it was no wonder that she

had no longer any attraction for me. Her adventures during the six years in which I had lost her would certainly interest my readers and form a pleasing episode in my book, and I would tell the tale if it were a true one; but, not being a romance writer, I am anxious that this work shall contain the truth and nothing but the truth. Convicted by her amorous and jealous Margrave of infidelity, she had been sent about her business. She had separated from her husband Pompeati, had followed a new lover to Brussels and there had caught the fancy of Prince Charles de Lorraine, who had obtained for her the direction of all the theatres in the Austrian Low Countries. She had then undertaken this vast responsibility, entailing heavy expenditure, till at last, after selling all her diamonds and lace, she had fled to Holland to avoid arrest. Her husband had killed himself in Vienna in a paroxysm caused by internal pain—he had cut open his stomach with a razor and died tearing at his entrails.

My business left me no time for sleep. M. Casanova came and asked me to dinner, telling me to meet him on the Exchange, a place well worth seeing. Millionaires are as plentiful as blackberries and anyone who is not worth more than a hundred thousand florins is considered a poor man. I found M. d'O— there and was asked by him to dinner for the following day at a small house he had on the Amstel. M. Casanova treated me with the greatest courtesy. After reading my pedigree, he went for his own and found it exactly the same; but he merely laughed and seemed to care little about it, differing in that respect from Don Antonio of Naples, who set such store by my pedigree and treated me with much politeness on that account. Nevertheless, he bade me make use of him in anything relating to business if I did anything in that way. I thought his daughter pretty, but neither her charms nor her wit made any impression on me. My thoughts were taken up with Esther and I talked so much about her at dinner that at last my cousin declared that she did not consider her pretty. Oh, you women! beauty is the only unpardonable offence in your eyes. Mlle. Casanova was Esther's friend and yet she could not bear to hear her praised.

On my seeing M. d'O— again after dinner, he told me that, if I cared to take fifteen per cent on my shares, he would take them from me and save broker's expenses. I thought the offer a good one and accepted it, taking a bill of exchange on Tourton & Baur. At the rate of exchange at Hamburg I found I should have seventy-two thousand francs, although at five per cent I had expected only sixty-nine thousand. This transaction won me high favour with Madame d'Urfé, who, perhaps, had not expected me to be so honest.

In the evening I went with M. Pels to Zaandam in a boat placed on a sleigh and impelled by a sail. It was an extraordinary, but at the same time an amusing and agreeable, mode of travelling. The wind was strong and we did fifteen miles an hour; we seemed to pass through the air as swiftly as an arrow. A safer and more convenient method of travelling cannot be imagined; it would be an ideal way of journeying round the world if there were such a thing as a frozen sea all round. The wind,

however, must be behind, as one cannot sail on a side wind, there being no rudder. I was pleased and astonished at the skill of our two sailors in lowering sail exactly at the proper time, for the sleigh ran a good way from the impetus it had already received and we stopped just at the bank of the river, whereas, if the sail had been lowered a moment later, the sleigh might have been broken to pieces. We had some excellent perch for dinner, but the strength of the wind prevented us from walking about. I went there again, but, as Zaandam is well known as the haunt of the millionaire merchants who retire and enjoy life there in their own way, I will say no more about it. We returned in a fine sleigh drawn by two horses, belonging to M. Pels, and he kept me to supper. This worthy man, whose face bore witness to his entire honesty, told me that, as I was now the friend of M. d'O— and himself, I should have nothing whatever to do with the Jews, but should address myself to them alone. I was pleased with this proposal, which made a good many of my difficulties disappear, and the reader will see the results of this course. Next day snow fell in large flakes and I went early to M. d'O—'s, where I found Esther in the highest of spirits. She gave me a warm welcome and began to rally me on having spent the whole night with Madame Trenti.

I might possibly have shown some slight embarrassment but her father said an honest man had nothing to be ashamed of in admiring talent. Then, turning to me, he said, "Tell me, M. Casanova, who this woman is?"

"She is a Venetian whose husband died recently; I knew her when I was a lad; it was six years since I had seen her last."

"You were agreeably surprised, then, to see your daughter?" said Esther.

"Why do you think the child is my daughter? Madame Trenti was married then."

"The likeness is really too strong. And how about your falling asleep yesterday when you were supping with M. Pels?"

"It was no wonder that I went to sleep, as I had not closed an eye the night before."

"I am envious of anyone who possesses the secret of getting a good sleep, for I have always to wait long hours before sleep comes to me and, when I awake, instead of being refreshed, I feel heavy and languid from fatigue."

"Try passing the night in listening to one in whom you take an interest telling the story of her life, and I promise you that you will sleep well the night after."

"There is no such person for me."

"No, because you have as yet seen only fourteen summers; but later on there will be someone."

"Maybe, but what I want just now is books and the help of someone who will guide my reading."

"That would be an easy matter for anyone who knew your tastes."

"I like history and travels, but for a book to please me it must be all true, as I lay it down at the slightest suspicion of its veracity."

"Now I think I may venture to offer my services and, if you will accept them, I believe I shall be able to give satisfaction."

"I accept your offer and shall keep you to your word."

"You need not be afraid of my breaking it; before I leave for The Hague, I will prove that I am reliable."

She then began to rally me on the pleasure I should have at The Hague, where I should see Madame Trenti again. Her freedom, mirth and extreme beauty set my blood on fire, and M. d'O— laughed heartily at the war his charming daughter waged on me. At eleven o'clock we got into a well-appointed sleigh and set out for his small house, where she told me I should find Mlle. Casanova and her betrothed.

"Nevertheless," said I, "you will continue to be my only attraction."

She made no answer, but it was easy to perceive that my avowal had not displeased her.

When we had gone some distance we saw the lovers, who had come out, in spite of the snow, to meet us. We got down and, after taking off our furs, entered the house. I gazed at the young gentleman, who looked at me a moment in return and then whispered in Mlle. Casanova's ear. She smiled and whispered something to Esther. Esther stepped up to her father and said a few words to him in a low voice and everybody began to laugh at once. They all looked at me and I felt certain that I was somehow the point of the joke, but I put on an indifferent air.

"There may be a mistake," said M. d'O—. "At any rate, we should ascertain the truth of the matter."

"M. Casanova, had you any adventures on your journey from The Hague to Amsterdam?"

At this I looked again at the young gentleman and guessed what they were talking about.

"No adventure to speak of," I answered, "except a meeting with a fine fellow who desired to see my carriage turn upside down into the ditch and who I think is present now."

At these words the laughter broke out afresh and the gentleman and I embraced each other; but, after he had given the true account of the adventure, his mistress pretended to be angry and told him that he ought to have fought. Esther observed that he had shown more true courage in listening to reason, and M. d'O— said he was strongly of his daughter's opinion; however, Mlle. Casanova, after airing her high-flown ideas, began to sulk with her lover.

To restore the general mirth, Esther said gaily, "Come, come, let us put on our skates and try the Amstel, for I am afraid that, unless we go forthwith, the ice will have melted." I was ashamed to ask her to let me off, though I would gladly have done so, but what will not love do! M. d'O— left us to our own devices. Mlle. Casanova's intended put on my skates, and the ladies put on their short petticoats with black velvet drawers to guard against certain accidents. We reached the river, and, as I was a perfect neophyte in this sport, the figure I cut may be

imagined. However, I resolutely determined to conquer my awkwardness and twenty times, to the peril of my spine, did I fall down upon the ice. I should have been much wiser to have left off, but I was ashamed to do so and I did not stop till, to my huge delight, we were summoned in to dinner. But I paid dearly for my obstinacy, for, when I tried to rise from the table, I felt as if I had lost the use of my limbs. Esther pitied me and said she would cure me. There was a good deal of laughter at my expense, and I let them laugh, as I felt certain that the whole thing had been contrived to turn me into derision, and, wishing to make Esther love me, I thought it best to simulate good temper. I passed the afternoon with M. d'O—, letting the young people go by themselves on the Amstel, where they stopped till dusk.

Next morning, when I awoke, I thought I was a lost man. I suffered a martyrdom of pain. The last of my vertebral bones, called by doctors the *os sacrum*, felt as if it had been crushed to atoms, although I had used almost the whole pot of ointment which Esther had given me for that purpose. In spite of my torments, I did not forget my promise and had myself carried to a bookseller's, where I bought all the books I thought likely to interest her. She was very grateful and told me to come and embrace her before I started if I wanted a pretty present.

It was not likely that I was going to refuse such an invitation as that, so I went early in the morning, leaving my post-chaise at the door. Her governess took me to her bed, where she was lying as fair and gay as Venus herself.

"I am quite sure," said she, "that you would not have come at all unless I had asked you to come and embrace me."

At this my lips were fastened on her mouth, her eyes and on every spot of her lovely face. But, seeing my eyes stray towards her bosom and guessing that I was going to make myself master of it, she stopped laughing and put herself on the defensive.

"Go away," said she, shyly, "go away and enjoy yourself at The Hague with the fair Trenti, who possesses so pretty a token of your love."

"My dear Esther, I am going to The Hague to talk business with the ambassador and for no other reason; and in six days at latest you will see me back again, as much your lover as before and desiring nothing better than to please you."

"I rely upon your word of honour, but mind you do not deceive me."

With these words, she put up her mouth and gave me so tender and passionate a kiss that I went away feeling certain of my bliss being crowned on my return. That evening, at supper-time, I reached Boaz's house.

CHAPTER 60

AMONGST the letters which were awaiting me was one from the comptroller-general, which advised me that twenty millions in govern-

ment securities had been placed in the hands of M. d'Afri, who was not to go beyond a loss of eight per cent, and another letter from my good patron, M. de Bernis, telling me to do the best I could and to be assured that the ambassador would be instructed to consent to whatever bargain might be made, provided the rate was not more disadvantageous than that of the Exchange at Paris. Boaz, who was astonished at the good bargain I had made with my shares, wanted to discount the government securities for me, and I should very likely have agreed to his terms if he had not required me to give him three months and the promise that the agreement should hold even in the case of peace being concluded in the meanwhile. It was not long before I saw that I should do well to get back to Amsterdam, but I did not care to break my word to Thérèse, whom I had promised to meet at The Hague. I received a letter from her while I was at the play, and the servant who brought it told me he was waiting to conduct me to her. I sent my own servant home and set out on my quest.

My guide made me climb to the fourth floor of a somewhat wretched house, and there I found this strange woman in a small room, attended by her son and daughter. The table stood in the midst of the room and was covered with a black cloth, and the two candles standing upon it made it look like some sort of sepulchral altar. The Hague was a court town. I was richly dressed; my elaborate attire made the saddest possible contrast with the gloom of my surroundings. Thérèse, dressed in black and seated between her children at that black table, reminded me of Medea. To see these two fair young creatures vowed to a lot of misery and disgrace was a sad and touching sight. I took the boy between my arms and, pressing him to my breast, called him my son. His mother told him to look upon me as his father from thenceforth. The lad recognised me; he remembered, much to my delight, seeing me in the May of 1753, in Venice, at Madame Manzoni's. He was slight but strong, his limbs were well proportioned, and his features intellectual. He was thirteen years old.

His sister sat perfectly still, apparently waiting for her turn to come. I took her on my knee, and, as I embraced her, Nature herself seemed to tell me that she was my daughter. She took my kisses in silence, but it was easy to see that she thought herself preferred to her brother and was charmed with the idea. All her clothing was a slight frock, and I was able to feel every limb and to kiss her pretty little body all over, delighted that so sweet a being owed her existence to me.

"Mamma, dear," said she, "is not this fine gentleman the same we saw at Amsterdam, who was taken for my papa because I am like him? But that cannot be, for my papa is dead."

"So he is, sweetheart; but I may be your dear friend, mayn't I? Would you like to have me for a friend?"

"Yes, yes!" she cried and, throwing her arms about my neck, gave me a thousand kisses, which I returned with delight.

After we had talked and laughed together, we sat down at table, and the heroine, Thérèse, gave me a delicate supper accompanied by

exquisite wines. "I never gave the Margrave better fare," said she, "at those nice little suppers we used to take together."

Wishing to probe the disposition of her son, whom I had agreed to take away with me, I addressed several remarks to him and soon discovered that he was of a false and deceitful nature, always on his guard, taking care of what he said and consequently speaking only from his head and not from his heart. Every word was delivered with a quiet politeness which, no doubt, was intended to please me.

I told him that this sort of thing was all very well on occasion, but that there were times when a man's happiness depended on his freedom from constraint; then and only then was his amiability, if he had any, displayed. His mother, thinking to praise him, told me that reserve was his chief characteristic, that she had trained him to keep his counsel at all times and places and that she was thus used to his being reserved with her, as with everyone else.

"All I can say is," said I, "your system is an abominable one. You may have strangled in their infancy all the finer qualities with which nature has endowed your son and have fairly set him on the way to become a monster instead of an angel. I don't see how the most devoted father can possibly have any affection for a son who keeps all his emotions under lock and key."

This outburst, which proceeded from the tenderness I would fain have felt for the boy, seemed to strike his mother dumb.

"Tell me, my dear, whether you feel yourself capable of showing me that confidence which a father has a right to expect of a good son, and whether you can promise to be perfectly open and unreserved towards me?"

"I promise that I will die rather than tell you a falsehood."

"That's just like him," said the mother. "I have succeeded in inspiring him with the utmost horror of untruthfulness."

"That's all very well, my dear madame, but you might have pursued a still better course and one which would have been still more conducive to his happiness."

"What is that?"

"I will tell you. It was not necessary to make him detest a lie; you should have rather endeavoured to make him a lover of the truth by displaying it to him in all its native beauty. This is the only way to make him lovable, and love is the sole bestower of happiness in this world."

"But isn't it the same thing not to lie and to tell the truth?" said the boy, with a smile which charmed his mother and displeased me.

"Certainly not; there is a great difference—for, to avoid lying, you have only to hold your tongue; and do you think that comes to the same thing as speaking the truth? You must open your mind to me, my son, and tell me all your thoughts, even if you blush in the recital. I will teach you how to blush, and soon you will have nothing to fear in laying open all your thoughts and deeds. When we have known each other a little longer, we shall see how we agree together. You must

understand that I cannot look upon you as my son until I see cause to love you, and I cannot have you call me father till you treat me as the best friend you have. You may be quite sure that I shall find a way to discover your thoughts, however cleverly you try to hide them. If I find you deceitful and suspicious, I shall certainly entertain no good regard for you. As soon as I have finished my business in Amsterdam, we will set out for Paris. I am leaving The Hague to-morrow and on my return I hope to find you instructed by your mother in a system of morality more consonant with my views and more likely to lead to your happiness."

On glancing at my little daughter, who had been listening to me with the greatest attention, I saw that her eyes were swimming with tears, which she could hardly retain.

"Why are you crying?" said the mother. "It is silly to cry." And with that the child ran to her mother and threw her arms around her neck.

"Would you like to come to Paris, too?" said I to her.

"Oh, yes! But mamma must come too, as she would die without me."

"What would you do if I told you to go?" said the mother.

"I would obey you, mamma, but how could I exist away from you?"

Thereupon my little daughter pretended to cry. I say pretended, as it was quite evident that the child did not mean what she said, and I am sure that her mother knew it as well as I.

It was really a melancholy thing to see the effects of a bad education on this young child, to whom nature had given intelligence and feeling. I took the mother to one side and said that, if she had intended to make actors of her children, she had succeeded to admiration, but, if she wished them to become useful members of society, her system had failed lamentably, as they were in a fair way to become monsters of deceit. I continued making her the most pointed remonstrances until, in spite of her efforts to control herself, she burst into tears. However, she soon recovered her composure and begged me to stay at The Hague a day longer, but I told her it was out of the question and left the room. I came in again a few minutes after, and Sophie came up to me and said, in a loving little voice, "If you are really my friend, you will give me some proof of your friendship."

"And what proof do you want, my dear?"

"I want you to come and sup with me to-morrow."

"I can't, Sophie dear, for I have just said 'no' to your mother and she would be offended if I granted you what I had refused her."

"Oh, no! she wouldn't; it was she who told me to ask you just now."

I naturally began to laugh, but, on her mother calling the girl a little fool and the brother adding that he had never committed such an indiscretion, the poor child began to tremble all over and looked abashed. I reassured her as best I could, not caring whether what I said displeased her mother or not, and I endeavoured to instill into her principles of a very different nature to those in which she had been reared, while she listened with an eagerness which proved that her

heart was still ready to learn the right way. Little by little her face cleared and I saw that I had made an impression and, though I could not flatter myself that any good I might do her would be lasting in its effects as long as she remained under the bad influence of her mother, I promised to come and sup with her the next evening, "but on the condition," I said, "that you give me a plain meal and one bottle of Chambertin only, for you are not too well off."

"I know that, but mamma says that you are going to pay for everything."

This reply made me go off into a roar of laughter and, in spite of her vexation, the mother was obliged to follow my example. The poor woman, hardened by the life she led, took the child's simplicity for stupidity, but I saw in her a rough diamond which wanted only polishing.

Thérèse told me that the wine did not cost her anything, as the son of the Rotterdam burgomaster furnished her with it, and that he would sup with us the next day if I would allow him to be present. I answered smilingly that I should be delighted to see him, and I went away after giving my daughter, of whom I felt fond, a tender embrace. I would have done anything to be entrusted with her, but I saw it would be no good trying to get possession of her, as the mother was evidently keeping her as a resource for her old age. This is a common way for adventuresses to look upon their daughters, and Thérèse was an adventuress in the widest acceptation of the term. I gave her twenty ducats to get clothes for my adopted son and Sophie, who, with spontaneous gratitude and her eyes filled with tears, came and gave me a kiss. Joseph was going to kiss my hand, but I told him it was degrading for one man to kiss another's hand and that in future he was to show his gratitude by embracing me as a son embraces his father.

Just as I was leaving, Thérèse took me to the closet where the two children were sleeping. I knew what she was thinking of, but all that was over long ago; I could think of no one but Esther.

The next day I found the burgomaster's son at my actress's house. He was a fine young fellow of twenty or twenty-one, but totally devoid of manners. He was Thérèse's lover, but he should have regulated his behaviour in my presence. Thérèse, seeing that he was posing as master of the field and that his manners disgusted me, began to snub him, much to his displeasure, and, after sneering at the poorness of the dishes and praising the wine which he had supplied, he went out, leaving us to finish our dessert by ourselves. I left myself at eleven, telling Thérèse that I should see her again before I went away. The Princesse de Galitzin, a Cantimir by birth, had asked me to dinner and this made me lose another day.

Next day I heard from Madame d'Urfé, who enclosed a bill of exchange on Boaz for twelve thousand francs. She said she had bought her shares for sixty thousand, that she did not wish to make anything on them and hoped I would accept the overplus as my broker's fee. She worded her offer with too much courtesy for me to refuse it. The

remainder of the letter was devoted to the wildest fancies. She said that her genius had revealed to her that I should bring back to Paris a boy born of the Mystical Marriage, and she hoped I would take pity on her. It was a strange coincidence and seemed likely to attach the woman still more closely to her visionary theories. I laughed when I thought how she would be impressed by Thérèse's son, who was certainly not born of the Mystical Marriage.

Boaz paid me my twelve thousand francs in ducats, and I made him my friend, as he thanked me for receiving the moneys in ducats, and he doubtless made a profit on the transaction, gold being a commodity in Holland and all payments being made in silver or paper money. At that time gold was at a low rate and nobody would take ducats.

After having an excellent dinner with the Princesse de Galitzin, I put on my cloak and went to the café. I found there the burgomaster's son, who was just beginning a game of billiards. He whispered to me that I might back him with advantage and, thinking he was sure of his stroke, I thanked him and followed his advice. However, after losing three games one after the other, I took his measure and began to lay against him without his knowledge. After playing for three hours and losing all the time, he stopped play and came to condole with me on my heavy loss. It is impossible to describe his amazed expression when I showed him a handful of ducats and assured him I had spent a very profitable evening in laying against him. Everybody in the room began to laugh at him, but he was the sort of young man who doesn't understand a joke and he went out in a rage. Soon after I left the billiard room myself and, according to my promise, went to see Thérèse, as I was leaving for Amsterdam the next day.

Thérèse was awaiting her young wine merchant but, on my recounting his adventures, she expected him no longer. I took my little daughter on my knee and lavished my caresses on her, and so left them, telling them we should see each other again in the course of three weeks or a month at latest.

As I was going home in the moonlight by myself, my sword under my arm, I was encountered all of a sudden by the poor dupe of a burgomaster's son.

"I want to know," said he, "if your sword has as sharp a point as your tongue."

I tried to quiet him by talking common sense and I kept my sword wrapped in my cloak, though his was bared and directed against me.

"You are wrong to take my jests in such bad part," said I. "However, I apologise to you."

"No apologies; look to yourself."

"Wait till to-morrow; you will be cooler then; but, if you still wish it, I will give you satisfaction in the midst of the billiard room."

"The only satisfaction you can give me is to fight; I want to kill you."

As evidence of his determination and to provoke me beyond recall,

he struck me with the flat of his sword, the first and last time in my life in which I have received such an insult. I drew my sword, but, still hoping to bring him to his senses, I kept strictly on the defensive and endeavoured to make him leave off. This conduct the Dutchman mistook for fear and pushed hard at me, lunging in a manner that made me look to myself. His sword passed through my necktie, a quarter of an inch farther in would have done the business.

I leapt to one side and, my danger no longer admitting of my fighting on the defensive I lunged out and wounded him in the chest. I thought this would have been enough for him, so I proposed we should terminate our engagement.

"I'm not dead yet," said he. "I want to kill you."

This was his watchword; and, as he leapt on me in a paroxysm of rage, more like a madman than a sensible being, I hit him four times. At the fourth wound he stepped back and, saying he had had enough, begged me to leave him.

I went off as fast as I could and was very glad to see from the look of my sword that his wounds were slight. I found Boaz still up and, on hearing what had taken place, he advised me to go to Amsterdam at once, though I assured him that the wounds were not mortal. I gave in to his advice and, as my carriage was at the saddler's, he lent me his and I set out, bidding my servant to come on the next day with my luggage and to rejoin me at the Old Bible in Amsterdam. I reached Amsterdam at noon and my man arrived in the evening.

I was curious to hear if my duel had made any noise, but, as my servant had left at an early hour, he had heard nothing about it. Fortunately for me, nothing whatever was known about it in Amsterdam for a week after; otherwise things might not have gone well with me, as the reputation of being a duellist is not a recommendation to financiers with whom one is about to transact business of importance.

The reader will not be surprised when I tell him that my first call was on M. d'O—, or rather on his charming daughter Esther, for she it was on whom I waited. It will be remembered that the way in which we parted did a good deal towards augmenting the warmth of my affection for her. On entering the room, I found Esther writing at a table.

"What are you doing, Esther, dear?"

"An arithmetical problem."

"Do you like problems?"

"I am passionately fond of anything which contains difficulties and offers curious results."

"I will give you something which will please you."

I made her, by way of jest, two magic squares, which delighted her. In return, she showed me some trifles with which I was well acquainted but which I pretended to think very astonishing. My good genius then inspired me with the idea of trying divination by the cabala. I told her to ask a question in writing and assured her that, by a certain kind of calculation, a satisfactory answer would be ob-

tained. She smiled and asked why I had returned to Amsterdam so soon. I showed her how to make the pyramid with the proper numbers and the other ceremonies, then I made her extract the answer in numbers, translating it into French, and greatly was she surprised to find that the cause which had made me return to Amsterdam so soon was—love.

Quite confounded, she said it was very wonderful, even though the answer might not be true, and she wished to know what masters could teach this mode of calculation.

"Those who know it cannot teach it to anyone."

"How did you learn it, then?"

"From a precious manuscript I inherited from my father."

"Sell it to me."

"I have burnt it, and I am not empowered to communicate the secret to anyone before I reach the age of fifty."

"Why fifty?"

"I don't know; but I do know that, if I communicated it to anyone before that age, I should run the risk of losing it myself. The elementary spirit who is attached to the oracle would leave it."

"How do you know that?"

"I saw it so stated in the manuscript I have spoken of."

"Then you are able to discover all secrets?"

"Yes, or I should be if the replies were not sometimes too obscure to be understood."

"As it does not take much time, will you be kind enough to get me an answer to another question?"

"With pleasure; you can command me in anything not forbidden by my familiar spirit."

She asked me what her destiny would be, and the oracle replied that she had not yet taken the first step towards it. Esther was astonished and called her governess to see the two answers, but the good woman saw nothing wonderful in them whatever. Esther impatiently called her a blockhead and entreated me to let her ask another question. I begged her to do so and she asked, "Who loves me most in Amsterdam?"

The oracle replied that no one loved her as well as he who had given her being. Poor Esther then told me that I had made her miserable and that she would die of grief if she could not succeed in learning the method of calculation. I gave no answer and pretended to feel sad at heart. She began to write down another question, putting her hand in front so as to screen the paper. I rose as if to get out of her way, but, while she was arranging the pyramid, I cast my eyes on the paper whilst walking up and down the room, and read her question. After she had gone as far as I had taught her, she asked me to extract the answer, saying that I could do so without reading the question. I agreed to do so on the condition that she would not ask a second time.

As I had seen her question, it was easy for me to answer it. She

had asked the oracle if she might show the questions she had propounded to her father, and the answer was that "she would be happy as long as she had no secrets from her father."

When she read these words, she gave a cry of surprise and could find no words wherewith to express her gratitude to me. I left her for the Exchange, where I had a long business conversation with M. Pels.

Next morning a handsome and gentlemanly man came with a letter of introduction from Thérèse, who told me that he would be useful in case I wanted any assistance in business. His name was Rigerboos. She informed me that the burgomaster's son was only slightly wounded and that I had nothing to fear, as the matter was not generally known, and that, if I had business at The Hague, I might return there in perfect safety. She said that my little Sophie talked of me all day and that I should find my son much improved on my return. I asked M. Rigerboos to give me his address, assuring him at the proper time I should rely on his services.

A moment after Rigerboos had gone, I got a short note from Esther, who begged me, in her father's name, to spend the day with her—at least, if I had no important engagement. I answered that, excepting a certain matter of which her father knew, I had no chieffer aim than to convince her that I desired a place in her heart and that she might be quite sure that I would not refuse her invitation.

I went to M. d'O— at dinner-time. I found Esther and her father puzzling over the method which drew reasonable answers out of a pyramid of numbers. As soon as her father saw me, he embraced me, saying how happy he was to possess a daughter capable of attracting me.

"She will attract any man who has sufficient sense to appreciate her."

"You appreciate her, then?"

"I worship her."

"Then embrace her."

Esther opened her arms and, with a cry of delight, threw them round my neck and gave me back all my caresses, kiss for kiss.

"I have got through all my business," said M. d'O—, "and the rest of my day is at your disposal. I have known from my childhood that there is such a science as the one you profess, and I was acquainted with a Jew who by its aid made an immense fortune. He, like you, said that, under pain of losing the secret, it could be communicated to only one person, but he put off doing so until at last it was too late, for a high fever carried him off in a few days. I hope you will not do as the Jew did; but in the meanwhile allow me to say that, if you do not draw a profit from this treasure, you do not know what it really is."

"You call this knowledge of mine a treasure, and yet you possess one far more excellent"—looking at Esther as I spoke.

"We will not discuss that just now. Yes, sir, I call your science a treasure."

"But the answers of the oracle are often very obscure."

"Obscure? The answers my daughter received are as clear as day."

"Apparently she is fortunate in the way she frames her questions; for on this the reply depends."

"After dinner we will try if I am so fortunate—at least, if you will be so kind as to help me."

"I can refuse you nothing, as I consider father and daughter as one being."

At table we discussed other subjects, as the chief clerks were present—notably the manager, a vulgar-looking fellow, who had very evident aspirations in the direction of my fair Esther. After dinner we went into M. d'O—'s private study and thereupon he drew two long questions out of his pocket. In the first he desired to know how to obtain a favourable decision from the States General in an important matter, the details of which he explained. I replied in terms the obscurity of which would have done credit to a professed Pythoness, and I left Esther to translate the answer into common sense and find a meaning in it.

With regard to the second answer I acted in a different manner; I was impelled to answer clearly and did so. M. d'O— asked what had become of a vessel belonging to the India Company of which nothing had been heard. It was known to have started on the return voyage and should have arrived two months before; this delay gave rise to the supposition that it had gone down. M. d'O— wished to know if it were still above water or whether it were lost, etc. As no tidings of it had come to hand, the company were on the lookout for someone to insure it and offered ten per cent, but nobody cared to run so great a risk, especially as a letter had been received from an English sea captain who said he had seen her sink.

I may confess to my readers, though I did not do so to M. d'O—, that with inexplicable folly I composed an answer that left no doubt as to the safety of the vessel, pronouncing it safe and sound and that we should hear of it in a few days. No doubt I felt the need of exalting my oracle, but this method was liable to destroy its credit forever. In truth, if I had guessed M. d'O—'s design, I would have curbed my vanity, for I had no wish to make him lose a large sum without profiting myself.

The answer made him turn pale and tremble with joy. He told us that secrecy in the matter was of the last importance, as he had determined to insure the vessel and drive a good bargain. At this, dreading the consequences, I hastened to tell him that, for all I knew, there might not be a word of truth in the oracle's reply and that I should die of grief if I were the involuntary cause of his losing an enormous sum of money through relying on an oracle, the hidden sense of which might be completely opposed to the literal translation.

"Have you ever been deceived by it?"

“Often.”

Seeing my distress, Esther begged her father to take no further steps in the matter. For some moments nobody spoke.

M. d'O— looked thoughtful and full of the project which his fancy had painted in such gay colours. He said a good deal about it, dwelling on the mystic virtues of numbers, and told his daughter to read out all the questions she had addressed to the oracle with the answers she had received. There were six or seven of them, all briefly worded, some direct and some equivocal. Esther, who had constructed the pyramids, had shone—with my potent assistance—in extracting the answers (which I had really invented) and her father, in the joy of his heart, seeing her so clever, imagined that she would become an adept in the science by the force of intelligence. The lovely Esther, who was much taken with the trifle, was quite ready to be of the same opinion.

After passing several hours in the discussion of the answers, which my host thought divine, we had supper and at parting M. d'O— said that, as Sunday was a day for pleasure and not business, he hoped I would honour them by passing the day at their pretty house on the Amstel, and they were delighted at my accepting their invitation.

I could not help pondering over the mysteries of the commercial mind, which narrows itself down to considerations of profit and loss. M. d'O— was decidedly an honest man; but, although he was rich, he was by no means devoid of the greed incident to his profession. I asked myself the question, how a man, who would consider it dishonourable to steal a ducat or to pick one up in the street and keep it, knowing to whom it belonged, could reconcile it with his conscience to make an enormous profit by insuring a vessel of the safety of which he was perfectly certain, since he believed the oracle infallible. Such a transaction was certainly fraudulent, as it is dishonest to play when one is certain of winning.

As I was going home, I passed a tea-garden and, seeing a good many people going in and coming out, I went in, curious to know how these places were managed in Holland. Great Heavens! I found myself the witness of an orgy, the scene a sort of cellar, a perfect cesspool of vice and debauchery. The discordant noise of the two or three instruments which formed the orchestra struck gloom to the soul and added to the horrors of the cavern. The air was dense with the fumes of bad tobacco, and vapours reeking of beer and garlic issued from every mouth. The company consisted of sailors, men of the lowest class, and a number of vile women. The sailors and the dregs of the people thought this den a garden of delight and considered its pleasures compensation for the toils of the sea and the miseries of daily labour. There was not a single woman there whose aspect had anything redeeming about it. I was looking at the repulsive sight in silence when a great hulking fellow—whose appearance suggested the blacksmith, and his voice, the blackguard—came up and asked me in bad Italian if I would like to dance. I answered in the negative, but, before leaving me, he

pointed out a Venetian woman who, he said, would oblige me if I gave her some drink.

Wishing to discover if she was anyone I knew, I looked at her attentively and seemed to recollect her features, although I could not decide who she could be. Feeling rather curious on the subject, I sat down next to her and asked if she came from Venice and if she had left that country some time ago.

"Nearly eighteen years," she replied.

I ordered a bottle of wine and asked her if she would take any; she said "yes" and added, if I liked, she would oblige me.

"I haven't time," I said, and gave the poor wretch the change I received from the waiter. She was full of gratitude and would have embraced me if I had allowed her.

"Do you like being in Amsterdam better than Venice?" I asked.

"Alas, no! for, if I were in my own country, I should not be following this dreadful trade."

"How old were you when you left Venice?"

"I was only fourteen and lived happily with my father and mother, who now may have died of grief."

"Who seduced you?"

"A rascally footman."

"In what part of Venice did you live?"

"I did not live in Venice, but at Friuli, not far off."

Friuli . . . eighteen years ago . . . a footman . . . I felt moved and, looking at the wretched woman more closely, soon recognised in her Lucie of Paséan. I cannot describe my sorrow, which I concealed as best I could, and tried hard to keep up my indifferent air. A life of debauchery, rather than the flight of time, had tarnished her beauty and ruined the once exquisite outlines of her form. Lucie, that innocent and pretty maiden, grown ugly, vile, a common prostitute! It was a dreadful thought. She drank like a sailor, without looking at me and without caring who I was. I took a few ducats from my purse and slipped them into her hand and, without waiting for her to find out how much I had given her, I left that horrible den.

I went to bed full of saddening thoughts. Not even under The Leads did I pass so wretched a day. I thought I must have arisen that day under some unhappy star! I loathed myself. With regard to Lucie I felt the sting of remorse, but at the thought of M. d'O— I hated myself. I considered that I should cause him a loss of three or four thousand florins, and the thought was a bitter drop in the cup of my affection for Esther. I fancied that she, as well as her father, would become my implacable foe; and love that is not returned is no love at all.

I spent a dreadful night. Lucie, Esther, her father, their hatred of me and my hatred of myself were the ground-work of my dreams. I saw Esther and her father, if not ruined, at all events impoverished by my fault, and Lucie only thirty-two years old and already deep in the abyss of vice, with an infinite prospect of misery and shame before her. The dawn was welcome indeed, for with its appearance a calm

came to my spirit; it is the darkness which is terrible to a heart full of remorse.

I got up and dressed in my best and went in a coach to pay my suit to the Princesse de Galitzin, who was staying at the Etoile d'Orient. I found her out; she had gone to the Admiralty. I went there and found her accompanied by M. de Reissak and the Comte de Tot, who had just received news of my friend Pesselier, at whose house I made his acquaintance and who was dangerously ill when I left Paris.

I sent away my coach and started to walk towards M. d'O—'s house on the Amstel. The extreme elegance of my costume was displeasing in the eyes of the Dutch populace and they hissed and hooted me, after the manner of the mob all the world over. Esther saw me coming from the window, drew the cord and opened the door. I ran in, shut the door behind me and, as I was going up the wooden staircase, on the fourth or fifth step my foot struck against some yielding substance. I looked down and saw a green pocket-book. I stooped down to pick it up, but was awkward enough to send it through an opening in the stairs, which had been doubtless made for the purpose of giving light to a stair below. I did not stop but went up the steps and was received with the usual hospitality and, on their expressing some wonder as to the unusual brilliance of my attire, I explained the circumstances of the case. Esther smiled and said I looked quite another person, but I saw that both father and daughter were sad at heart. Esther's governess came in and said something to her in Dutch, at which, in evident distress, she ran and embraced her father.

"I see, my friends, that something has happened to you. If my presence is a restraint, treat me without ceremony and bid me go."

"It's not so great an ill-hap after all; I have enough money left to bear the loss patiently."

"If I may ask the question, what is the nature of your loss?"

"I have lost a green pocket-book containing a good deal of money, which, if I had been wise, I would have left behind, as I did not require it till to-morrow."

"And you don't know where you lost it?"

"It must have been in the street, but I can't imagine how it can have happened. It contained bills of exchange for large amounts, and of course they don't matter, as I can stop payment on them, but there were also notes of the Bank of England for heavy sums, and they are gone, as they are payable to the bearer. Let us give thanks to God, my dear child, that it is no worse and pray to Him to preserve to us what remains and, above all, to keep us in good health. I have had much heavier losses than this and have been able, not only to bear the misfortune, but to make up the loss. Let us say no more about the matter."

While he was speaking, my heart was full of joy, but I kept up the sadness befitting the scene. I had not the slightest doubt that the pocket-book in question was the one I had unluckily sent through the staircase but which could not be lost irretrievably. My first point was how to make capital of my grand discovery in the interests of my

cabalistic science. It was too fine an opportunity to be lost, especially as I still felt the sting of having been the cause of an enormous loss to the worthy man. I would give them a grand proof of the infallibility of my oracle. (How many miracles are done in the same way!) The thought put me into a good humour. I began to crack jokes, and my jests drew peals of laughter from Esther.

We had an excellent dinner and choice wine. After we had taken coffee, I said that, if they liked, we would have a game of cards, but Esther said that this would be a waste of time, as she would much prefer making the oracular pyramids. This was exactly what I wanted.

"With all my heart," I said. "We will do as you suggest."

"Shall I ask where my father lost his pocket-book?"

"Why not? It's a plain question; write it down."

She made the pyramid and the reply was that the pocket-book had not been found by anyone. She leapt up from her seat, danced for joy and threw her arms round her father's neck, saying, "We shall find it; we shall find it, papa!"

"I hope so, too, my dear. That answer is really very consoling." Wherewith Esther gave her father one kiss after another.

"Yes," said I, "there is certainly ground for hope, but the oracle will be dumb to all questions . . ."

"Dumb! Why?"

"I was going to say it will be dumb if you do not give me as many kisses as you have given your father."

"Oh, then I will soon make it speak!" said she, laughing; and, throwing her arms about my neck, she began to kiss me, and I to give her kisses in return.

Ah! what happy days they seem when I recall them; and still I like dwelling on those days despite my sad old age, the foe of love. When I recall these events, I grow young again and feel once more the delights of youth, despite the long years which separate me from that happy time.

At last Esther sat down again, and asked, "Where is the pocket-book?" And the pyramid told her that the pocket-book had fallen through the opening in the fifth step of the staircase.

M. d'O— said to his daughter, "Come, my dear Esther, let us go and test the truth of the oracle." And, full of joy and hope, they went to the staircase, I following them, and M. d'O— showed her the hole through which the pocket-book must have fallen. He lighted a candle and we went down to the cellar and before long he picked up the book, which had fallen into some water. We went up again in high spirits and there we talked for over an hour as seriously as you please on the divine powers of the oracle, which, according to them, should render its possessor the happiest of mortals.

He opened the pocket-book and showed us the four thousand-pound notes. He gave two to his daughter and made me take the two remaining, but I took them with one hand and with the other gave them to Esther, begging her to keep them for me; but, before she would

agree to do so, I had to threaten her with the stoppage of the famous cabalistic oracle. I told M. d'O— that all I asked was his friendship, and thereon he embraced me and swore to be my friend to the death.

By making the fair Esther the depository of my two thousand pounds, I was sure of winning her affection by an appeal, not to her interest, but to her truthfulness. This charming girl had about her so powerful an attraction that I felt as if my life were wound up with hers.

I told M. d'O— that my chief object was to negotiate the twenty millions at a small loss.

"I hope to be of service to you in the matter," he said, "but, as I shall often want to speak to you, you must come and live in our house, which you must look upon as your own."

"My presence will be a restraint on you. I shall be a trouble."

"Ask Esther."

Esther joined her entreaties to her father's and I gave in, taking good care not to let them see how pleased I was. I contented myself with expressing my gratitude, to which they answered that it was I who was conferring a favour.

M. d'O— went into his study and, as soon as I found myself alone with Esther, I kissed her tenderly, saying that I should not be happy till I had won her heart.

"Do you love me?" she asked.

"Dearly, and I will do all in my power to show how well I love you if you will love me in return."

She gave me her hand, which I covered with kisses, and she went on to say: "As soon as you come and live with us, you must look out for a good opportunity for asking my hand of my father. You need not be afraid he will refuse you, but the first thing for you to do is to move into our house."

"My dear little wife! I will come to-morrow."

We said many sweet things to one another, talked about the future and told each other our inmost thoughts; and I was undoubtedly truly in love, for not a single improper fancy rose in my mind in the presence of my dear, who loved me so well.

The first thing that M. d'O— said on his return was that there would be a piece of news on the Exchange the next day.

"What is that, papa dear?"

"I have decided to take the whole risk—amounting to three thousand florins—of the ship which is thought to have gone down. They will call me mad, but they themselves will be the madmen; which is what I should be if, after the proof we have had, I doubted the oracle any more."

"My dear sir, you make me tremble. I told you I have often been deceived by the oracle."

"That must have been, my dear fellow, when the reply was obscure and you did not get at the real sense of it; but in the present case there is no room for doubt. I shall make three million florins or, if the worst comes to the worst, my loss won't ruin me."

Esther, whom the finding of the pocket-book had made enthusiastic, told her father to lose no time. As for me, I could not undo what I had done but I was again overwhelmed with sadness. M. d'O— saw it and, taking my hand, said, "If the oracle does lie this time, I shall be none the less your friend."

"I am glad to hear it," I answered, "but, as this is a matter of the utmost importance, let me consult the oracle a second time before you risk your three hundred thousand florins." This proposition pleased father and daughter highly; they could not express their gratitude to me for being so careful of their interests.

What followed was truly surprising—enough to make one believe in fatality. My readers probably will not believe it; but, as these *Memoirs* will not be published till I have left this world, it would be of no use for me to disguise the truth in any way, especially as the writing of them is only the amusement of my leisure hours. Well—let him who will believe it—this is absolutely what happened: I wrote down the question myself, erected the pyramid and carried out all the magical ceremonies without letting Esther have a hand in it. I was delighted to be able to check an act of extreme imprudence and was determined to do so. A double meaning, which I knew how to get, would abate M. d'O—'s courage and annihilate his plans. I had thought over what I wanted to say and thought I had expressed it properly in the numbers. With that idea, as Esther knew the alphabet perfectly well, I let her extract the answer and transfer it into letters. What was my surprise when I heard her read these words:

"In a matter of this kind, neither fear nor hesitate. Your repentance would be too hard for you to bear."

That was enough. Father and daughter ran to embrace me and M. d'O— said that, when the vessel was sighted, a tithe of the profits should be mine. My surprise prevented me giving any answer; I had intended to write "trust" and "hazard," and I had written "fear" and "hesitate." But, thanks to his prejudice, M. d'O— saw in my silence only confirmation of the infallibility of the oracle. In short, I could do nothing more, and I took my departure, leaving everything to the care of chance, who sometimes is kind to us in spite of ourselves.

The next morning I took up my abode in a splendid suite of rooms in Esther's house, and the day after I took her to a concert, where she joked with me on the grief I should endure on account of the absence of Madame Trenti and my daughter. Esther was the only mistress of my soul. I lived but to adore her, and I should have satisfied my love, had not Esther been a girl of good principles. I could not gain possession of her and I was full of love and longing.

Four or five days after my installation in my new quarters, M. d'O— communicated to me the result of a conference which he had had with M. Pels and six other bankers on the twenty millions. They offered ten millions in hard cash and seven millions in paper money, bearing interest at five or six per cent, with a deduction of one per cent brokerage. Furthermore, they would cancel a sum of twelve hun-

dred thousand florins owed by the French India Company to the Dutch Company.

With such conditions I could not venture to decide on my own responsibility, although, personally, I thought them reasonable enough, the impoverished state of the French treasury being taken into consideration. I sent copies of the proposal to M. de Boulogne and M. d'Afri, begging from them an immediate reply. At the end of a week I received an answer in the writing of M. de Courteil, acting for M. de Boulogne, instructing me to refuse absolutely any such proposal and to report at Paris if I saw no chance of making a better bargain. I was again informed that peace was imminent, though the Dutch were of quite another opinion.

In all probability, I should have left for Paris immediately but for a circumstance which astonished nobody but myself in the family of which I had become a member. The confidence of M. d'O— increased every day and, as if chance were determined to make me a prophet in spite of myself, news was received of the ship which was believed to be lost and which, on the faith of my oracle, M. d'O— had bought for three hundred thousand florins. The vessel was at Madeira. Esther's joy and, still more, my own may be imagined when we saw the worthy man enter the house triumphantly with confirmation of the good news.

"I have insured the vessel from Madeira to the mouth of the Texel for a trifle," said he. "And so," turning to me, "you may count from this moment on the tenth part of the profit, which I owe entirely to you."

The reader may imagine my delight; but there is one thing he will not imagine, unless he knows my character better than I do myself—the embarrassment into which I was thrown by the following remarks:

"You are now rich enough," said M. d'O—, "to set up for yourself amongst us, and you are positively certain to make an enormous fortune in a short time merely by making use of your cabala. I will be your agent; let us live together and, if you like my daughter as she likes you, you may call yourself my son as soon as you please."

In Esther's face shone forth joy and happiness, and in mine, though I adored her, there was to be seen, alas! nothing but surprise. I was stupid with happiness and the constraint in which I held myself. I did not analyse my feelings, but, though I knew it not, there can be no doubt that my insuperable objection to the marriage tie was working within my soul. A long silence followed; at last, recovering my powers of speech, I succeeded, with an effort, in speaking to them of my gratitude, my happiness, my love, and ended by saying that, in spite of my affection for Esther, I must, before settling in Holland, return to Paris and discharge the confidential and responsible duty which the government had placed in my hands. I would then return to Amsterdam perfectly independent. This long peroration won their approval. Esther was quite pleased and we spent the rest of the day

in good spirits. Next day M. d'O— gave a splendid dinner to several of his friends, who congratulated him on his good fortune, being persuaded that his courageous action was to be explained by his having had secret information of the safety of the vessel, though none of them could see from what source he, and he only, had obtained it.

A week after this lucky event he gave me an ultimatum on the matter of the twenty millions, in which he guaranteed that France would not lose more than nine per cent in the transaction.

I immediately sent a copy of his proposal to M. d'Afri, begging him to be as prompt as possible, and another copy to the comptroller-general, with a letter in which I warned him that the thing would certainly fall through if he delayed a single day in sending full powers to M. d'Afri to give me the necessary authority to act.

I wrote to the same effect to M. de Courteuil and the Duc de Choiseul, telling them that I was to receive no brokerage, but that I would all the same accept a proposal which I thought a profitable one, and saying that I had no doubt of obtaining my expenses from the French government.

As it was a time of rejoicing with us, M. d'O— thought it would be a good plan to give a ball. All the most distinguished people in Amsterdam were invited to it. The ball and supper were of the most splendid description, and Esther, who was a blaze of diamonds, danced all the quadrilles with me and charmed every beholder by her grace and beauty.

I spent all my time with Esther and every day grew more and more in love and more unhappy, for we were tormented by abstinence, which irritated while it increased our desires.

Esther was an affectionate mistress but, discreet rather by training than by disposition, the favours she accorded me were of the most insignificant description. She was lavish of nothing but her kisses, but kisses are rather irritating than soothing. I used to be nearly wild with love. She told me, like other virtuous women, that, if she agreed to make me happy, she was sure I would not marry her and that, as soon as I made her my wife, she would be mine and mine only. She did not think I was married, for I had given her too many assurances to the contrary, but she thought I had a strong attachment to someone in Paris. I confessed that she was right and said that I was going there to put an end to it so that I might be bound to her alone. Alas! I lied when I said so, for Esther was inseparable from her father, a man of forty, and I could not make up my mind to pass the remainder of my days in Holland.

Ten or twelve days after sending the ultimatum, I received a letter from M. de Boulogne informing me that M. d'Afri had all necessary instructions for effecting the exchange of the twenty millions, and another letter from the ambassador was to the same effect. He warned me to take care that everything was right, as he would not part with the securities before receiving 18,200,000 francs in current money.

The sad time of parting at last drew near amid many regrets and

tears from all of us. Esther gave me the two thousand pounds I had won so easily, and her father at my request gave me bills of exchange to the amount of a hundred thousand florins, with a note of two hundred thousand florins authorising me to draw upon him till the whole sum was exhausted. Just as I was going, Esther gave me fifty shirts and fifty handkerchiefs of the finest quality.

It was not my love for Manon Baletti, but a foolish vanity and a desire to cut a figure in the luxurious city of Paris which made me leave Holland. But such was the disposition that Mother Nature had given me that fifteen months under The Leads had not been enough to cure this mental malady of mine. But, when I reflect upon after-events of my life, I am not astonished that The Leads proved ineffectual, for the numberless vicissitudes which I have gone through since have not cured me—my disorder, indeed, being of the incurable kind. There is no such thing as destiny. We ourselves shape our lives, notwithstanding that saying of the Stoics, *Volentem ducit, nolentem trahit*.

After promising Esther to return before the end of the year, I set out with a clerk of the company who had bought the French securities and reached The Hague, where Boaz received me with a mingled air of wonder and admiration. He told me that I had worked a miracle. "But," he added, "to succeed thus you must have persuaded them that peace was on the point of being concluded."

"By no means," I answered. "So far from my persuading them, they are of the opposite opinion; but, all the same, I may tell you that peace is really imminent."

"If you like to give me that assurance in writing," said he, "I will make you a present of fifty thousand florins' worth of diamonds."

"Well," I answered, "the French ambassador is of the same opinion as myself; but I don't think the certainty is sufficiently great as yet for you to risk your diamonds upon it."

Next day I finished my business with the ambassador, and the clerk returned to Amsterdam.

I went to supper at Thérèse's and found her children very well dressed. I told her to go on to Rotterdam the next day and wait for me there with her son, as I had no wish to cause scandal at The Hague.

At Rotterdam Thérèse told me that she knew I had won half a million at Amsterdam and that her fortune would be made if she could leave Holland for London. She had instructed Sophie to tell me that my good luck was the effect of the prayers she had addressed to Heaven on my behalf. I saw where the land lay and enjoyed a good laugh at the mother's craft and the child's piety, and gave her a hundred ducats, telling her she should have another hundred when she wrote to me from London. It was very evident that she thought the sum a very moderate one, but I would not give her any more. She waited for the moment when I was getting into my carriage to beg me to give her another hundred ducats, and I said in a low tone that she should have a thousand if she would give me her daughter.

She thought it over for a minute and then said that she could not part with her.

"I know very well why," I answered, and, drawing a watch from my fob, I gave it to Sophie, embraced her and went on my way. I arrived in Paris on February tenth and took sumptuous apartments near the Rue Montorgueil.

CHAPTER 61

DURING my journey from The Hague to Paris, short as it was, I had plenty of opportunities for seeing that the mental qualities of my adopted son were by no means equal to his physical ones.

As I have said, the chief point which his mother had impressed on him was reserve, which she had instilled into him out of regard for her own interests. My readers will understand what I mean, but the child, in following his mother's instructions, had gone beyond the bounds of moderation; he possessed reserve, it is true, but he was also full of dissimulation, suspicion and hypocrisy—a fine trio of deceit in one who was still a boy. He not only concealed what he knew but pretended to know that which he did not. His idea of the one quality necessary to success in life was an impenetrable reserve and, to obtain this, he had accustomed himself to silence the dictates of his heart and say no word that had not been carefully weighed. Giving other people wrong impressions passed with him for discretion and, his soul being incapable of a generous thought, he seemed likely to pass through life without knowing what friendship meant.

Knowing that Madame d'Urfé counted on the boy for the accomplishment of her absurd hypostasis and that, the more mystery I made of his birth, the more extravagant would be her fancies about it, I told the lad that, if I introduced him to a lady who questioned him by himself about his birth, he was to be perfectly open with her.

On my arrival in Paris my first visit was to my patron, whom I found in grand company, amongst whom I recognised the Venetian ambassador, who pretended not to know me.

"How long have you been in Paris?" said the minister, taking me by the hand.

"I have only just stepped out of my chaise."

"Then go to Versailles. You will find the Duc de Choiseul and the comptroller-general there. You have been wonderfully successful, go and get your meed of praise and come to see me afterwards. Tell the duke that Voltaire's appointment to be a gentleman-in-ordinary to the king is ready."

I was not going to start for Versailles at midday, but ministers in Paris are always talking in this style, as if Versailles were at the end of the street. Instead of going there, I went to see Madame d'Urfé.

She received me with the words that her genius had informed her

that I should come to-day and that she was delighted with the fulfilment of the prophecy.

"Corneman tells me that you have been doing wonders in Holland; but I see more in the matter than he does, as I am quite certain that you have taken over the twenty millions yourself. The funds have risen, and a hundred millions at least will be in circulation in the course of the next week. You must not be offended at my shabby present, for, of course, twelve thousand francs are nothing to you. You must look upon them as a little token of friendship.

"I am going to tell my servants to close all the doors, for I am too glad to see you not to want to have you all to myself."

A profound bow was the only reply I made to this flattering speech, and I saw her tremble with joy when I told her that I had brought a lad of twelve with me, whom I intended to place in the best school I could find, that he might have a good education.

"I will send him myself to Viar's, where my nephews are. What is his name? Where is he? I know well what this boy is. I long to see him. Why did you not alight from your journey at my house?"

Her questions and replies followed one another in rapid succession. I should have found it impossible to get in a word edgewise, even if I had wanted to, but I was very glad to let her expend her enthusiasm and took good care not to interrupt her. At the first opportunity I told her I should have the pleasure of presenting the young gentleman to her the day after the morrow, as on the morrow I had an engagement at Versailles.

"Does the dear lad speak French? While I am arranging for his going to school, you must really let him come and live with me."

"We will discuss that question on the day after to-morrow, madame."

"Oh, how I wish the day after to-morrow were here!"

On leaving Madame d'Urfé, I went to my lottery office and found everything in perfect order. I then went to the Italian play and found Silvia and her daughter in the dressing-room.

"My dear friend," said she when she saw me, "I know that you have achieved a wonderful success in Holland and I congratulate you."

I gave her an agreeable surprise by saying that I had been working for her daughter, and Manon herself blushed and lowered her eyes in a very suggestive manner. "I will be with you at supper," I added, "and then we can talk at our ease." On leaving them, I went to the amphitheatre, and what was my surprise to see in one of the first boxes Madame X— C— V—, with all her family. My readers will be glad to hear their history.

Madame X— C— V—, by birth a Greek, was the widow of an Englishman, by whom she had six children, four of whom were girls. On his deathbed he became a Catholic out of deference to the tears of his wife; but, as his children could not inherit his forty thousand pounds invested in England without conforming to the Church of England, the family returned to London, where the widow complied with all the obligations of the law of England. What will people not

do when their interests are at stake! Though, in a case like this, there is no need to blame a person for yielding to prejudices which had the sanction of the law.

It was now the beginning of the year 1758 and five years before, when I was in Padua, I had fallen in love with the eldest daughter, but a few months after, when we were in Venice, Madame X— C— V— thought good to exclude me from her family circle. The insult which the mother put upon me was softened by the daughter, who wrote me a charming letter, which I love to read even now. I may as well confess that my grief was the easier to bear as my time was taken up by my fair nun, M— M—, and my dear C— C—. Nevertheless, Mlle. X— C— V—, though only fifteen, was of a perfect beauty and all the more charming in that to her physical advantages she joined those of a cultured mind.

Count Algarotti, the King of Prussia's chamberlain, was giving her lessons and several young nobles were among her suitors, her preference apparently being given to the heir of the family of Memmo de St. Marcuola. He died a year afterwards, while he was procurator.

My surprise at seeing this family at such a time and place may be imagined. Mlle. X— C— V— saw me directly, and pointed me out to her mother, who beckoned to me with her fan to come to their box.

She received me in the friendliest manner possible, telling me that we were not in Venice now and she hoped I would often come and see them at the Hôtel de Bretagne, in the Rue St.-André-des-Arts. I told them I did not wish to recall any events which might have happened in Venice and, her daughter having joined her entreaties to those of her mother, I promised to accept their invitation.

Mlle. X— C— V— struck me as prettier than ever, and my love, after sleeping for five years, awoke to fresh strength and vigour. They told me they were going to pass six months in Paris before returning to Venice. In return I informed them that I intended making Paris my home, that I had just left Holland and was going to Versailles the next day, so that I could not pay my respects to them till the day after. I also begged them to accept my services, in a manner which let them know I was a person of some importance.

Mlle. X— C— V— said she was aware that the results of my Dutch mission should render me dear to France, that she had always lived in hopes of seeing me once more and that my famous flight from The Leads had delighted them, "for," she added, "we have always been fond of you."

"I fancy your mother has kept her fondness for me very much to herself," I whispered to her.

"We won't say anything about that," said she, in the same tone. "We learnt all the circumstances of your wonderful flight from a letter of sixteen pages you wrote to M. Memmo. We trembled with joy and shuddered with fear as we read it."

"How did you know I had been in Holland?"

"M. de la Popelinière told us about it yesterday."

M. de la Popelinière, the *fermier-général*, whom I had met seven years before at Passy, came into the box just as his name was spoken. After complimenting me, he said that, if I could carry through the same operation for the India Company, my fortune would be made.

"My advice to you is," he said, "to get yourself naturalised before it becomes generally known that you have made half a million of money."

"Half a million! I only wish I had!"

"You must have made that at the lowest calculation."

"On the contrary, I give you my assurance that, if my claim for brokerage is not allowed, the transaction will prove absolutely ruinous to me."

"Ah! no doubt you are right to take that tone. Meanwhile, everyone wants to make your acquaintance, for France is deeply indebted to you. You have caused the funds to recover in a very marked degree."

After the play was over, I went to Silvia's, where I was received as if I had been the favourite child of the family; but on the other hand I gave them certain proofs that I wished to be regarded in that light. I was impressed with the idea that to their unshaken friendship I owed all my good luck, and I made the father, mother, daughter and two sons receive the presents I had got for them. The best was for the mother, who handed it on to her daughter. It was a pair of diamond earrings of great beauty, for which I had given fifteen thousand francs. Three days after I sent her a box containing fine linen from Holland and choice Mechlin and Alençon lace. Mario, who liked smoking, got a gold pipe; the father, a choice gold and enamelled snuffbox, and I gave a striking watch to the son, of whom I was very fond. I shall have occasion later on to speak of this lad, whose natural qualities were far superior to his position in life. But, you will ask, was I rich enough to make such presents? No, I was not, and I knew it perfectly well; but I gave these presents because I was afraid of not being able to do so if I waited.

I set out for Versailles at daybreak and M. de Choiseul received me as before; his hair was being dressed, but for a moment he laid down his pen, which showed that I had become a person of greater importance in his eyes. After a slight but graceful compliment, he told me that, if I thought myself capable of negotiating a loan of a hundred millions to bear interest at four per cent, he would do all in his power to help me. My answer was that I would think it over when I heard how much I was to have for what I had done already.

"But everybody says you have made two hundred thousand florins by it."

"That would not be so bad; half a million of francs would be a fair foundation on which to build a fortune; but I can assure Your Excellency that there is not a word of truth in the report. I defy

anyone to prove it; and, till some substantial proof is offered, I think I can lay claim to brokerage.

"True, true. Go to the comptroller-general and state your views to him."

M. de Boulogne stopped the occupation on which he was engaged to give me a most friendly greeting, but, when I said that he owed me a hundred thousand florins, he smiled sardonically.

"I happen to know," he said, "that you have bills of exchange to the amount of a hundred thousand crowns payable to yourself."

"Certainly, but that money has no connection with my mission, as I can prove to you by referring to M. d'Afri. I have in my head an infallible project for increasing the revenue by twenty millions in a manner which will cause no irritation."

"You don't say so! Communicate your plan and I promise to get you a pension of a hundred thousand francs and letters of nobility as well, if you like to become a Frenchman."

"I will think it over."

On leaving M. de Boulogne, I went to the palace, where a ballet was going on before the Marquise de Pompadour.

She bowed to me as soon as she saw me and, on my approaching her, told me that I was an able financier and that the "gentlemen below" could not appreciate my merits. She had not forgotten what I had said to her eight years before in the theatre at Fontainebleau. I replied that all good gifts were from above, whither, with her help, I hoped to attain.

On my return to Paris I went to the Hôtel de Bourbon to inform my patron of the result of my journey. His advice to me was to continue to serve the government well, as its good fortune would come to be mine. On my telling him of my meeting with the X— C— V—'s, he said that M. de la Popelinière was going to marry the elder daughter.

When I got to my house, my son was nowhere to be found. My landlady told me that a great lady had come to call on "my lord" and had taken him away with her. Guessing that this was Madame d'Urfé, I went to bed without troubling myself any further. Early next morning my clerk brought me a letter. It came from the old attorney, uncle to Gaetan's wife, whom I had helped to escape from the jealous fury of her brutal husband. The attorney begged me to come and speak to him at the courts or to make an appointment at some place where he could see me. I went to the courts and found him there.

"My niece," he began, "found herself obliged to go into a convent; and from this vantage ground she is pleading against her husband, with the aid of a barrister, who will be responsible for the costs. However, to win our case, we require the evidence of yourself, Count Tiretta and other servants who witnessed the scene at the inn."

I did all I could and four months afterwards Gaetan simplified matters by a fraudulent bankruptcy, which obliged him to leave

France; in due time and place, I shall have something more to say about him. As for his wife, who was young and pretty, she paid her counsel in love's money and was very happy with him—and may be happy still for all I know, but I have certainly lost sight of her.

After my interview with the old attorney, I went to Madame X—'s to see Tiretta, who was out. Madame was still in love with him and he continued to make a virtue of necessity. I left my address and went to the Hôtel de Bretagne to pay my first call on Madame X— C— V—. The lady, though she was not over-fond of me, received me with great politeness. I possibly cut a better figure in her eyes when rich and in Paris, than when we were in Venice. We all know that diamonds have the strange power of fascination, and that they form an excellent substitute for virtue!

Madame X— C— V— had with her an old Greek named Zandiri, brother to M. de Bragadin's major-domo, who had just died. I uttered some expressions of sympathy and the boor did not take the trouble to answer me, but I was avenged for his foolish stiffness by the enthusiasm with which I was welcomed by everyone else. The eldest girl, her sisters and the two sons almost overwhelmed me with friendliness. The eldest son was only fourteen and was a young fellow of charming manners, but evidently extremely independent, and he sighed for the time when he would be able to devote himself to a career of profligacy, for which he was well fitted. Mlle. X— C— V— was both beautiful and charming in her manners and had received an excellent education, of which, however, she made no parade. One could not stay in her presence without loving her, but she was no flirt, and I soon saw that she held out no vain hopes to those who had the misfortune not to please her. Without being rude, she knew how to be cold, and it was all the worse for those to whom her coldness did not show that their quest was useless.

The first hour I passed in her company chained me a captive to her triumphant car. I told her as much and she replied that she was glad to have such a captive. She took the place in my heart where Esther had reigned a week before, but I freely confess that Esther yielded only because she was away. As to my attachment to Silvia's daughter, it was of such a nature as not to hinder me falling in love with any other woman who chanced to take my fancy. In the libertine's heart love cannot exist without substantial food, and women who have had some experience of the world are well aware of this fact. The youthful Baletti was a beginner and so knew nothing of these things.

M. Farsetti, a Venetian of noble birth, a knight of Malta, a great student of the occult sciences and a good Latin versifier, came in at one o'clock. Dinner was just ready and Madame X— C— V— begged him to stay. She asked me also to dine with them but, wishing to dine with Madame d'Urfé, I refused the invitation for the nonce.

M. Farsetti, who had known me very well in Venice, noticed me only by a side-glance and, without showing any vexation, I paid him

back in the same coin. He smiled at Mlle. X— C— V—'s praise of my courage. She noticed his expression and, as if to punish him for it, went on to say that I had now the admiration of every Venetian and that the French were anxious to have the honour of calling me a fellow citizen. M. Farsetti asked me if my post at the lottery paid well. I replied, coolly, "Oh, yes, well enough for me to pay my clerks' salaries."

He understood the drift of my reply and Mlle. X— C— V— smiled.

I found my supposed son with Madame d'Urfé, or rather in that amiable visionary's arms. She hastened to apologise for carrying him off and I turned it off with a jest, having no other course to take.

"I made him sleep with me," she said, "but I shall be obliged to deprive myself of this privilege for the future, unless he promises to be more discreet."

I thought the idea a grand one, and the little fellow, in spite of his blushes, begged her to say how he had offended.

"We shall have the Comte de St. Germain," said Madame d'Urfé, "to dinner. I know he amuses you and I like you to enjoy yourself at my house."

"For that, madame, your presence is all I need; nevertheless, I thank you for considering me."

In due course St. Germain arrived and in his usual manner sat himself down, not to eat but to talk. With a face of imperturbable gravity he told the most incredible stories, which one had to pretend to believe, as he was always either the hero of the tale or an eye-witness of the event. All the same, I could not help bursting into laughter when he told us of something that happened as he was dining with the Fathers of the Council of Trent.

Madame d'Urfé wore on her neck a large magnet. She said that it would one day happen that this magnet would attract the lightning and that she would consequently soar into the sun. I longed to tell her that, when she got there, she could be no higher up than on the earth, but I restrained myself; and the great charlatan hastened to say that there could be no doubt about it and that he, and he only, could increase the force of the magnet a thousand times. I said, dryly, that I would wager twenty thousand crowns he would not so much as double its force, but Madame d'Urfé would not let us bet, and after dinner she told me in private that I should have lost, as St. Germain was a magician. Of course I agreed with her.

A few days later the magician set out for Chambord, where the King had given him a suite of rooms and a hundred thousand francs, that he might be at liberty to work on the dyes which were to assure the superiority of French materials over those of any other country. St. Germain had won over the King by arranging a laboratory where he occasionally tried to amuse himself, though he knew little about chemistry, but the King was a victim of an almost universal ennui. To enjoy a harem recruited from amongst the most ravishing beauties

and often from the ranks of neophytes, with whom pleasure had its difficulties, one would have needed to be a god, and Louis XV was only a man after all.

It was the famous marquise who had introduced the adept to the King, in the hope of his distracting the monarch's boredom by giving him a taste for chemistry. Indeed, Madame de Pompadour was under the impression that St. Germain had given her the water of perpetual youth, and therefore she felt obliged to make the chemist a good return. This wondrous water, taken according to the charlatan's directions, could not, indeed, make old age retire and give way to youth, but, according to the marquise, it would preserve one *in statu quo* for several centuries.

As a matter of fact, the water (or the giver of it) had worked wonders, if not on her body, at least on her mind; she assured the King that she was not getting older. The King was as much deluded by this grand impostor as she was, for one day he showed the Duc des Deux-Ponts a diamond of the first water, weighing twelve carats, which he fancied he had made himself. "I melted down," said Louis XV, "small diamonds weighing twenty-four carats and obtained this large one weighing twelve." Thus it came to pass that the infatuated monarch gave the impostor the suite formerly occupied by Marshal Saxe. The Duc des Deux-Ponts told me this story with his own lips one evening when I was supping with him and a Swede, the Comte de Levenhoop, at Metz.

Before I left Madame d'Urfé, I told her that the lad might be he who should make her to be born again, but that she would spoil all if she did not wait for him to attain the age of puberty. After what she had said about his misbehaviour, the reader will guess what made me say this. She sent him to board with Viar, gave him masters in everything and disguised him under the name of the Comte d'Aranda, although he was born at Bayreuth and his mother never had anything to do with a Spaniard of that name. It was three or four months before I went to see him, as I was afraid of being insulted on account of the name which the visionary Madame d'Urfé had given him.

One day Tiretta came to see me in a fine coach. He told me that his elderly mistress wanted to become his wife, but that he would not hear of it, though she offered to endow him with all her worldly goods. I told him that, if he gave in, he might pay his debts, return to Treviso and live pleasantly there; but his destiny would not allow him to take my advice.

I had resolved on taking a country house and fixed on one called Little Poland, which pleased me better than all the others I had seen. It was well furnished and was a hundred paces distant from the Madeleine Gate. It was situated on slightly elevated ground near the royal park behind the Duc de Grammont's garden and its owner had given it the name of Pleasant Warsaw. It had two gardens, one of which was on a level with the first floor, three reception rooms, large stables, coach houses, baths, a good cellar and a splendid kitchen.

The master was called "The Butter King" and always wrote himself down so; the name had been given to him by Louis XV on the monarch's stopping at the house and liking the butter. "The Butter King" let me his house for a hundred louis per annum and gave me an excellent cook called "The Pearl," a true blue-ribbon of the order of cooks, and to her he gave charge of all his furniture and the plate I should want for a dinner of six persons, engaging to get me as much plate as I wanted at the hire of a sou an ounce. He also promised to let me have what wine I wanted and said all he had was of the best and, moreover, cheaper than I could get it in Paris, as he had no *octroi* to pay on it.

Matters having been arranged on these terms, in the course of a week I got a good coachman, two fine carriages, five horses, a groom and two footmen. Madame d'Urfé, who was my first guest, was delighted with my new abode and, as she imagined that I had done it all for her, I left her in that flattering opinion. I never could believe in the mortality of snatching from poor mortal men the delusions which make them happy. I also let her retain the notion that young d'Aranda, the count of her own making, was a scion of the nobility, that he was born for a mysterious operation unknown to the rest of mankind, that I was only his caretaker (here I spoke the truth) and that he must die and yet not cease to live. All these whimsical ideas were the products of her brain, which was occupied only with the impossible, and I thought the best thing I could do was to agree with everything. If I had tried to undeceive her, she would have accused me of want of trust in her, for she was convinced that all her knowledge was revealed to her by her genius, who spoke to her only by night. After she had dined with me, I took her home full of happiness.

Camille sent me a lottery ticket, which she had invested in at my office and which proved to be a winning one, I think for a thousand crowns or thereabouts. She asked me to come and sup with her and bring the money with me. I accepted her invitation and found her surrounded by all the girls she knew and their lovers. After supper I was asked to go to the opera with them, but we had scarcely got there when I lost my party in the crowd. I had no mask on and soon found myself attacked by a black domino, whom I knew to be a woman, and, as she told me a hundred truths about myself in a falsetto voice, I was interested and determined on finding out who she was. At last I succeeded in persuading her to come with me into a box and, as soon as we were in and I had taken off her mask, I was astonished to find she was Mlle. X— C— V—.

"I came to the ball," said she, "with one of my sisters, my elder brother and M. Farsetti. I left them to go into a box and change my domino."

"They must feel very uneasy."

"I dare say they do, but I am not going to take pity on them till the end of the ball."

Finding myself alone with her and certain of having her in my

company for the rest of the night, I began to talk of our old love-making, and I took care to say that I was more in love with her than ever. She listened to me kindly, did not oppose my embraces and by the few obstacles she placed in my way I judged that the happy moment was not far off. Nevertheless I felt that I must practise restraint that evening, and she showed me that she was obliged to me.

"I heard at Versailles, my dear mademoiselle, that you are going to marry M. de la Popelinière."

"So they say. My mother wishes me to do so and the old financier fancies he has me in his talons already, but he is mistaken, as I will never consent to such a thing."

"He is old but very rich."

"He is very rich and very generous, for he promises me a dowry of a million if I am left a childless widow; and, if I had a son, he would leave me all his property."

"You wouldn't have much difficulty in complying with the second alternative."

"I shall never have anything to do with his money, for I should never make my life miserable by a marriage with a man whom I do not love, while I do love another."

"Another! Who is the fortunate mortal to whom you have given your heart's treasure?"

"I do not know if my loved one is fortunate. My lover is a Venetian and my mother knows of it, but she says that I should not be happy, that he is not worthy of me."

"Your mother is a strange woman, always crossing your affections."

"I cannot be angry with her. She may possibly be wrong, but she certainly loves me. She would rather that I should marry M. Farsetti, who would be very glad to have me, but I detest him."

"Has he made a declaration in terms?"

"He has, and all the marks of contempt I have given him seem to have no effect."

"He clings hard to hope; but the truth is, you have fascinated him."

"Possibly, but I do not think him susceptible of any tender or generous feeling. He is a visionary, surly, jealous and envious in his disposition. When he heard me expressing myself about you in the manner you deserve, he had the impudence to say to my mother before my face that she ought not to receive you."

"He deserves that I should give him a lesson in manners, but there are other ways in which he may be punished. I shall be delighted to serve you in any way I can."

"Alas! if I could only count on your friendship I should be happy."

The sigh with which she uttered these words sent fire through my veins and I told her I was her devoted slave, that I had fifty thousand crowns which were at her service and would risk my life to win her favours. She replied that she was truly grateful to me and, as she threw her arms about my neck, our lips met, but I saw that she was

weeping, so I took care that the fire which her kisses raised should be kept within bounds. She begged me to come and see her often, promising that, as often as she could manage it, we should be alone. I could ask no more and, after I had promised to come and dine with them on the morrow, we parted.

I passed an hour in following her about, enjoying my new position of intimate friend, and then returned to my Little Poland. It was a short distance, for, though I lived in the country, I could get to any part of Paris in a quarter of an hour. I had a clever coachman and capital horses not used to being spared. I got them from the royal stables and, as soon as I lost one, I got another from the same place, having to pay two hundred francs. This happened to me several times, for, to my mind, going fast is one the greatest pleasures which Paris offers.

Having accepted an invitation to dinner at the X— C— V—'s, I did not give myself much time for sleep, and I went out on foot with a cloak on. The snow was falling in large flakes and, when I got to Madame's, I was as white as a sheet from head to foot. She gave me a hearty welcome, laughing and saying that her daughter had been telling her how she had puzzled me, and that she was delighted to see me come to dinner without formality. "But," added she, "it's Friday to-day and you will have to fast, though, after all, the fish is very good. Dinner is not ready yet. You had better go and see my daughter, who is still a-bed."

As may be imagined, this invitation had not to be repeated, for a pretty woman looks better in bed than anywhere else. I found Mlle. X— C— V— sitting up in bed writing, but she stopped as soon as she saw me.

"How is this, sweet lie-a-bed, not up yet?"

"Yes, I am staying in bed partly because I feel lazy and partly because I am freer here."

"I was afraid you were not quite well."

"Nor am I. However, we will say no more about that now. I am just going to take some soup, as those who foolishly established the institution of fasting were not polite enough to ask my opinion on the subject. It does not agree with my health and I don't like it, so I am not going to get up even to sit at table, though I shall thus deprive myself of your society."

I naturally told her that, in her absence, dinner would have no savour, and I spoke the truth.

As the presence of her sister did not disturb us, she took out of her pocket-book an epistle in verse which I had addressed to her when her mother had forbidden me the house, "This fatal letter," said she, "which you called *The Phoenix*, has shaped my life and may prove the cause of my death." I had called it *The Phoenix* because, after bewailing my unhappy lot, I proceeded to predict how she would afterwards give her heart to a mortal whose qualities would make him deserve the name of Phoenix. A hundred lines were taken up in the de-

scription of these imaginary mental and moral characteristics, and certainly the being who should have them all would be right worthy of worship, for he would be rather a god than a man.

"Alas!" said Mlle. X— C— V—, "I fell in love with this imaginary being and, feeling certain that such an one must exist, I set myself to look for him. After six months I thought I had found him. I gave him my heart, I received his, we loved each other fondly. But for the last four months we have been separated and during the whole time I have had only one letter from him. Yet I must not blame him, for I know he cannot help it. Such is my sorry fate; I can neither hear from him nor write to him."

This story was a confirmation of a theory of mine, namely, that the most important events in our lives proceed often from the most trifling causes. My epistle was nothing better than a number of lines of poetry more or less well written, and the being I had delineated was certainly not to be found, as he surpassed by far all human perfections, but a woman's heart travels so quickly and so far! Mlle. X— C— V— took the thing literally and fell in love with a chimera of goodness and then was fain to turn this into a real lover, not thinking of the vast difference between the ideal and the real. For all that, when she thought she had found the original of my fancy portrait, she had no difficulty in endowing him with all the good qualities I had pictured. Of course, Mlle. X— C— V— would have fallen in love if I had never written her a letter in verse, but she would have done so in a different manner and probably with different results.

As soon as dinner was served, we were summoned to do justice to the choice fish which M. de la Popelinière had provided. Madame X— C— V—, a narrow-minded Greek, was naturally bigoted and superstitious. In the mind of a silly woman the idea of an alliance between the most opposite of beings, God and the Devil, seems quite natural. A priest had told her that, since she had converted her husband, her salvation was secure, for the *Scriptures* solemnly promised "a soul for a soul" to everyone who would lead a heretic or a heathen within the fold of the church. And, as Madame X— C— V— had converted her husband, she felt no anxiety about the life of the world to come, as she had done all that was necessary. However, she ate fish on the days appointed—the reason being that she preferred it to flesh.

Dinner over, I returned to the lady's bedside and there stayed till nearly nine o'clock, keeping my passions well under control all the time. I was foppish enough to think that her feelings were as lively as mine, and I did not care to show myself less self-restrained than she, though I knew then, as I know now, that this was a false line of argument. It is the same with opportunity as with fortune—one must seize them when they come to us, or else they go by, often to return no more.

Not seeing Farsetti at the table, I suspected there had been a quarrel and I asked my sweetheart about it; but she told me I was mistaken in supposing they had quarrelled with him and that the reason

of his absence was that he would never leave his house on a Friday. The deluded man had had his horoscope drawn and, learning by it that he would be assassinated on a Friday, he resolved always to shut himself up on that day. He was laughed at but persisted in the same course till he died four years ago at the age of seventy. He thought to prove by the success of his precautions that a man's destiny depends on his discretion and the precautions he takes to avoid the misfortunes of which he has had warning. This line of argument holds good in all cases except when the misfortunes are predicted in a horoscope; for either the ills predicted are avoidable, in which case the horoscope is a useless piece of folly, or else the horoscope is the interpreter of destiny, in which case all the precautions in the world are of no avail. The Chevalier Farsetti was therefore a fool to imagine he had proved anything at all. He would have proved a good deal for many people if he had gone out on a Friday and had chanced to have been assassinated. Picus de la Mirandola, who believed in astrology, says, I have no doubt truly, "*Astra influunt, non cogunt.*" But would it have been a real proof of the truth of astrology if Farsetti had been assassinated on a Friday? In my opinion, certainly not.

The Comte d'Eigreville had introduced me to his sister, the Comtesse du Romain, who had been wanting to make my acquaintance ever since she had heard of my oracle. It was not long before I made friends with her husband and her two daughters, the elder of whom, nicknamed "*Contenfeu*," married M. de Polignac later on. Madame du Romain was handsome rather than pretty, but she won the love of all by her kindness, her frank courtesy and her eagerness to be of service to her friends. She had a magnificent figure and would have awed a whole bench of judges if she had pleaded before them.

At her house I got to know Mesdames de Valbelle and de Roncerolles, Princesse de Chimai and many others who were then in the best society of Paris. Although Madame du Romain was not proficient in the occult sciences, she had nevertheless consulted my oracle more frequently than Madame d'Urfé. She was of the utmost service to me in connection with an unhappy circumstance of which I shall speak presently.

The day after my long conversation with Mlle. X— C— V—, my servant told me that there was a young man waiting who wanted to give me a letter with his own hands. I had him in and, on my asking him from whom the letter came, he replied that I should find all particulars in the letter and that he had orders to wait for an answer. The epistle ran as follows:

"I am writing this at two o'clock in the morning. I am weary and in need of rest, but a burden on my soul deprives me of sleep. The secret I am about to tell you will no longer be so grievous when I have confided in you. I shall feel eased by placing it in your breast. I am with child and my situation drives me to despair. I was obliged to write you this because I felt I could not say it. Give me a word in reply."

My feelings on reading the above may be guessed. I was petrified with astonishment and could only write, "I will be with you at eleven o'clock."

No one should say that he has passed through great misfortunes unless they have proved too great for his mind to bear. The confidence of Mlle. X— C— V— showed me that she was in need of support. I congratulated myself on having the preference and vowed to do my best for her, did it cost me my life. These were the thoughts of a lover, but for all that I could not conceal from myself the imprudence of the step she had taken. In such cases as these there is always the choice between speaking or writing, and the only feeling which can give the preference to writing is false shame, at bottom mere cowardice. If I had not been in love with her, I should have found it easier to have refused my aid in writing than if she had spoken to me, but I loved her to distraction.

"Yes," said I to myself, "she can count on me. Her mishap makes her all the dearer to me."

And below this there was another voice, a voice which whispered to me that, if I succeeded in saving her, my reward was sure. I am well aware that more than one grave moralist will fling stones at me for this avowal, but my answer is that such men cannot be in love as I was.

I was punctual to my appointment and found the fair unfortunate at the door of the hotel.

"You are going out, are you? Where are you going?"

"I am going to mass at the Church of the Augustinians."

"Is this a saint's day?"

"No; but my mother makes me go every day."

"I will come with you."

"Yes, do; give me your arm; we will go into the cloisters and talk there."

Mlle. X— C— V— was accompanied by her maid, but she knew better than to be in the way, so we left her in the cloisters. As soon as we were alone, she said to me, "Did you read my letter?"

"Yes, of course; here it is, burn it yourself."

"No, keep it and do so with your own hands."

"I see you trust in me and I assure you I will not abuse your trust."

"I am sure you will not. I am four months with child; I can doubt it no longer and the thought maddens me!"

"Comfort yourself, we will find some way to get over it."

"Yes; I leave all to you. You must procure an abortion."

"Never, dearest! That is a crime!"

"Alas! I know that well; but it is not a greater crime than suicide, and there lies my choice: either to destroy the wretched witness of my shame or to poison myself. For the latter alternative I have everything ready. You are my only friend and it is for you to decide which it shall be. Speak to me! Are you angry that I did not go to the Chevalier Farsetti rather than to you?"

She saw my astonishment and stopped short and tried to wipe away the tears which escaped from her eyes. My heart bled for her.

"Laying the question of crime on one side," said I, "abortion is out of our power. If the means employed are not violent, they are uncertain and, if they are violent, they are dangerous to the mother. I will never risk becoming your executioner; but reckon on me, I will not forsake you. Your honour is as dear to me as your life. Be calm and henceforth think that the peril is mine, not yours. Make up your mind that I shall find some way of escape and that there will be no need to cut short that life to preserve which I would gladly die. And allow me to say that, when I read your note, I felt glad—I could not help it—that in such an emergency you chose me before all others to be your helper. You will find that your trust was not given in vain, for no one loves you as well as I, and no one is so fain to help you. Later you shall begin to take the remedies I will get for you, but I warn you to be on your guard, for this is a serious matter, one of life and death. Possibly you have already told somebody about it—your maid or one of your sisters?"

"I have not told anybody but you, not even the author of my shame. I tremble when I think what my mother would do and say if she found out my situation. I am afraid she will draw her conclusions from my shape."

"So far there is nothing to be observed in that direction; the beauty of the outline still remains intact."

"But every day increases its size and for that reason we must be quick in what we do. You must find a surgeon who does not know my name and take me to him to be bled."

"I will not run the risk; it might lead to the discovery of the whole affair. I will bleed you myself; it is a simple operation."

"How grateful I am to you! I feel as if you had already brought me from death to life. What I should like you to do would be to take me to a midwife's. We can easily go without attracting any notice at the first ball at the opera."

"Yes, sweetheart, but that step is not necessary and it might lead to our betrayal."

"No, no; in this great town there are midwives in every quarter and we should never be known; we might keep our masks on all the time. Do me this kindness. A midwife's opinion is certainly worth having."

I could not refuse her request, but I made her agree to wait till the last ball, as the crowd was always greater and we had a better chance of going out free from observation. I promised to be there in a black domino with a white mask, in the Venetian fashion, and a rose painted beside the left eye. As soon as she saw me go out, she was to follow me into a carriage. All this was carried out, but more of it anon.

I returned with her and dined with them without taking any notice of Farsetti, who was also at the table and had seen me come back

from mass with her. We did not speak a word to one another; he did not like me and I despised him.

I must here relate a grievous mistake of which I was guilty and which I have not yet forgiven myself.

I had promised to take Mlle. X— C— V— to a midwife, but I certainly ought to have taken her to a respectable woman's, for all we wanted to know was how a pregnant woman should regulate her diet and manner of living. But my evil genius took me by the Rue St. Louis, and there I saw the Montigni entering her house with a pretty girl whom I did not know, and so out of curiosity I went in after them. After amusing myself there, with Mlle. X— C— V— running in my head all the time, I asked the woman to give me the address of a midwife, as I wanted to consult one. She told me of a house in the Marais, where, according to her, dwelt the pearl of midwives, and began telling me some stories of her exploits, which all went to prove that the woman was an infamous character. I took her address, however, and, as I should have to go there by night, I went the next day to see where the house was.

Mlle. X— C— V— began to take the remedies which I brought her, which ought to have weakened and destroyed the result of love, but, as she did not experience any benefit, she was impatient to consult a midwife. On the night of the last ball she recognised me, as we had agreed, and followed me out into the coach she saw me enter and in less than a quarter of an hour we reached the house of shame.

A woman of about fifty received us with great politeness and asked what she could do.

Mlle. X— C— V— told her that she believed herself pregnant and desired some means of concealing her misfortune. The wretch answered with a smile that she might as well tell her plainly that it would be easy to procure abortion. "I will do your business," said she, "for fifty louis, half to be paid in advance on account of drugs, and the rest when it's all over. I will trust in your honesty and you will have to trust in mine. Give me the twenty-five louis down and come or send to-morrow for the drugs and instructions for using them."

"If my drugs," said she, "contrary to my expectation, do not do any good, we will try some other ways, and in any case, if I do not succeed in obliging you, I will return you your money."

"I don't doubt it for a moment," said I, "but would you tell me what are those other ways?"

"I should tell the lady how to destroy the fœtus."

I might have told her that to kill the child meant giving a mortal wound to the mother, but I did not feel inclined to enter into an argument with this vile creature.

"If madame decides on taking your advice," said I, "I will bring you the money for drugs to-morrow."

I gave her two louis and left. Mlle. X— C— V— told me she had no doubt of the infamy of this woman, as she was sure it was impossible to destroy the offspring without the risk of killing the mother also.

"My only trust," said she, "is in you." I encouraged her in this idea, dissuading her from any criminal attempts, and assured her over and over again that she should not find her trust in me misplaced. All at once she complained of feeling cold and asked if we had not time to warm ourself in Little Poland, saying that she longed to see my pretty house. I was surprised and delighted with the idea. The night was too dark for her to see the exterior charms of my abode, she would have to satisfy herself with the inside and leave the rest to her imagination. I thought my hour had come. I made the coach stop and we got down and walked some way and then took another at the corner of the Rue de la Ferronnerie. I promised the coachman six francs beyond his fare and in a quarter of an hour he put us down at my door.

I rang with the touch of the master, "The Pearl" opened the door and told me that there was nobody within, as I very well knew, but it was her habit to do so.

"Quick!" said I, "light us a fire and bring some glasses and a bottle of champagne."

"Would you like an omelette?"

"Very well."

"Oh, I should like an omelette so much!" said Mlle. X— C— V—. She was ravishing, and her laughing air seemed to promise me a moment of bliss. I sat down before the blazing fire and made her sit on my knee, covering her with kisses, which she gave me back as lovingly. I had almost won what I wanted when she asked me in a sweet voice to stop. I obeyed, thinking it would please her, feeling sure that she delayed my victory only to make it more complete and that she would surrender after the champagne. I saw love, kindness, trust and gratitude shining in her face, and I should have been sorry for her to think that I claimed her as a mere reward. No, I wanted her love, and nothing but her love.

At last we got our last glass of champagne, we rose from the table and sentimentally but with gentle force I laid her on a couch and held her amorously in my arms. But, instead of giving herself up to my embraces, she resisted them, at first by those prayers which usually make lovers more enterprising, then by serious remonstrances and at last by force. This was too much; the mere idea of using violence has always shocked me and I am still of opinion that the only pleasure in the amorous embrace springs from perfect union and agreement. I pleaded my cause in every way; I painted myself as the lover flattered, deceived, despised! At last I told her that I had had a cruel awakening and I saw that the shaft went home. I fell on my knees and begged her to forgive me. "Alas!" said she, in a voice full of sadness, "I am no longer mistress of my heart and have far greater cause for grief than you." The tears flowed fast down her cheeks, her head rested on my shoulder and our lips met; but, for all that, the piece was over. The idea of renewing the attack never came into my head and, if it had, I should have scornfully rejected it. After a long silence,

of which we both stood in need, she to conquer her shame and I to repress my anger, we put on our masks and returned to the opera. On our way she dared to tell me that she should be obliged to decline my friendship if she had to pay for it so dearly.

"The emotions of love," I replied, "should yield to those of honour, and your honour as well as mine require us to continue friends. What I would have done for love I will now do for devoted friendship, and in future I will die rather than make another attempt to gain those favours of which I thought you deemed me worthy."

We separated at the opera and the vast crowd made me lose sight of her in an instant. Next day she told me that she had danced all night. She possibly hoped to find in that exercise the cure which no medicine seemed likely to give her.

I returned to my house in a bad humour, trying in vain to justify a refusal which seemed humiliating and almost incredible. My good sense showed me, in spite of all sophisms, that I had been grievously insulted. I recollected the witty saying of Populia, who was never unfaithful to her husband except when she was with child: "*Non tollo vectorem,*" said she, "*nisi navi plena.*"

I felt certain that I was not loved and the thought grieved me; and I considered that it would be unworthy of me to love one whom I could no longer hope to possess. I resolved to avenge myself by leaving her to her fate, feeling that I could not allow myself to be duped as I had been.

The night brought wisdom with it and, when I awoke in the morning, my mind was calm and I was still in love. I determined to act generously by the unfortunate girl. Without my aid she would be ruined; my course, then, would be to continue my services and show myself indifferent to her favours. The part was no easy one, but I played it right well, and at last my reward came of itself.

CHAPTER 62

THE difficulties I encountered only served to increase my love for my charming Englishwoman. I went to see her every morning and, as my interest in her condition was genuine, she could have no suspicion that I was acting a part, or attribute my care of her to anything but the most delicate feelings. For her part she seemed well pleased in the alteration of my behaviour, though her satisfaction may very probably have been assumed. I understood women well enough to know that, though she did not love me, she was probably annoyed at seeing my new character sit upon me so easily.

One morning, in the midst of an unimportant and disconnected conversation, she complimented me upon my strength of mind in subduing my passion, adding, with a smile, that my desire could not have pricked me very sharply, seeing that I had cured myself so well in the

course of a week. I quietly replied that I owed my cure not to the weakness of my passion but to my self-respect.

"I know my own character," I said, "and, without undue presumption, I think I may say that I am worthy of a woman's love. Naturally, after your convincing me that you think differently, I feel humiliated and indignant. Do you know what effect such feelings have on the heart?"

"Alas!" said she, "I know too well. Their effect is to inspire one with contempt for her who gave rise to them."

"That is going too far, at least in my case. My indignation was merely succeeded by a renewed confidence in myself and a determination to be revenged."

"To be revenged! In what way?"

"I wish to compel you to esteem me, by proving to you that I am lord of myself and can pass by with indifference what I once so ardently desired. I do not know whether I have succeeded yet, but I may say that I can now contemplate your charms without desiring to possess them."

"You are making a mistake, for I never ceased to esteem you and I esteemed you as much a week ago as I do to-day. Not for a moment did I think you capable of leaving me to my fate as a punishment for having refused to give way to your transports, and I am glad that I read your character rightly."

We went on to speak of the opiate I was making her take and, as she saw no change in her condition, she wanted me to increase the dose, a request I took care not to grant, as I knew that more than half a drachm might kill her. I also forbade her to bleed herself again, as she might do herself a serious injury without gaining anything by it. Her maid, of whom she had been obliged to make a confidante, had had her bled by a student, her lover. I told Mlle. X— C— V— that, if she wanted these people to keep her counsel, she must be liberal with them, and she replied that she had no money. I offered her money and she accepted fifty louis, assuring me that she would repay the sum, which she needed for her brother Richard. I had not as much money about me, but I sent her the same day a packet of twelve hundred francs, with a note in which I begged her to have recourse only to me in all her necessities. Her brother got the money and thought himself authorised to apply to me for aid in a much more important matter.

He was a young man and a profligate and had got into a house of ill-fame, from which he came out in sorry plight. He complained bitterly that M. Farsetti had refused to lend him four louis and asked me to speak to his mother that she might pay for his cure. I consented, but, when his mother heard what was the matter with him, she said it would be much better to leave him as he was, as this was the third time he had been in this condition and that to have him cured was a waste of money, as, no sooner was he well, than he began his dissipated life afresh. She was quite right, for I had him

cured at my expense by an able surgeon and he was in the same way a month after. This young man seemed intended by nature for shameful excesses, for at the age of fourteen he was an accomplished profligate.

His sister was now six months with child and, as her figure grew great, so did her despair. She resolved not to leave her bed and it grieved me to see her thus cast down. Thinking me perfectly cured of my passion for her, she treated me purely as a friend, making me touch her all over to convince me that she dared not show herself any longer. I played in short the part of a midwife, but with what a struggle! I had to pretend to be calm and unconcerned when I was consumed with passion. She spoke of killing herself in a manner that made me shudder, as I saw that she had reflected on what she was saying. I was in a difficult position when Fortune came to my assistance in a strange and amusing manner.

One day, as I was dining with Madame d'Urfé, I asked her if she knew of any way by which a girl, who had allowed her lover to go too far, might be protected from shame. "I know of an infallible method," she replied, "the aroph of Paracelsus to wit, and it is easy of application. Do you wish to know more about it?" she added; and, without waiting for me to answer, she brought a manuscript and put it in my hands. This powerful emmenagogue was a kind of unguent composed of several drugs, such as saffron, myrrh, etc., compounded with virgin honey. The dose had to be repeated five or six times a day for a whole week.

This nostrum and the manner of administering it struck me in so laughable a light that I could not keep my countenance. I laughed with all my heart, but for all that I spent the next two hours in reading the dreams of Paracelsus, in which Madame d'Urfé put more trust than in the truths of the *Gospel*; I afterwards referred to Boerhaave, who speaks of the aroph in more reasonable terms. Seeing, as I have remarked, the charming Mlle. X— C— V— several hours a day without any kind of constraint, feeling in love with her all the time and always restraining my feelings, it is no wonder if the hidden fire threatened at every moment to leap up from the ashes of its concealment. Her image pursued me unceasingly, of her I always thought and every day made it more evident that I should know rest no more till I succeeded in extinguishing my passion by obtaining possession of her charms.

Alone at home and thinking only of her, I resolved to tell her of my discovery, hoping she would need my help in the introduction of the cylinder. I went to see her at ten and found her, as usual, in bed; she was weeping because the opiate I gave her did not take effect. I thought the time a good one for introducing the aroph of Paracelsus, which I assured her was an infallible means of attaining the end she desired. I added lengthy arguments to persuade her of the efficacy of this cure, and then, seeing that she was absorbed in thought, I said that, as her lover was away, she would need a sure friend to live in

the same house with her and give her the dose according to the directions of Paracelsus.

All at once she burst into a peal of laughter and asked me if I had been jesting all the time.

I thought the game was up. The remedy was an absurd one, on the face of it, and, if her common sense told her as much, it would also make her guess my motive. But what limits are there to the credulity of a woman in her condition?

"If you wish," said I, persuasively, "I will give you the manuscript where all that I have said is set down plainly. I will also show you what Boerhaave thinks about it."

I saw that these words convinced her; they had acted on her as if by magic.

She was silent for some time, for, though she was quick-witted enough, a woman's natural modesty and her own frankness prevented her from guessing my artifice.

I, too, astonished at my success in making her believe this fable, remained silent.

At last, breaking the silence, she said sadly, "The method seems to me an excellent one, but I do not think I ought to make use of it."

Then she asked me if the aroph took much time to make.

"Two hours at most," I answered, "if I succeed in procuring English saffron, which Paracelsus prefers to the Oriental saffron."

At that moment her mother came in with the Chevalier Farsetti and, after some talk of no consequence, asked me to stay to dinner. I was going to decline, when Mlle. X— C— V— said she would sit at table, on which I accepted, and we all left the room to give her time to dress. She was not long in dressing and, when she appeared, her figure seemed to me quite nymph-like. I was astonished and could scarcely believe my eyes and was on the point of thinking that I had been imposed on, for I could not imagine how she could manage to conceal the fulness I had felt with my own hands.

M. Farsetti sat by her, and I by the mother.

Mlle. X— C— V—, whose head was full of the aroph, asked her neighbour, who gave himself out for a great chemist, if he knew it.

"I fancy I know it better than anyone," answered Farsetti, in a self-satisfied manner.

"What is it good for?"

"That is too vague a question."

"What does the word mean?"

"It is an Arabic word, of which I do not know the meaning, but no doubt Paracelsus would tell us."

"The word," said I, is neither Arabic nor Hebrew nor, indeed, of any language at all. It is a contraction which conceals two other words."

"Can you tell us what they are?" said the chevalier.

"Certainly; 'aro' comes from 'aroma,' and 'ph' is the initial of 'philosophorum'."

"Did you get that out of Paracelsus?" said Farsetti, evidently annoyed.

"No, sir; I saw it in Boerhaave."

"That's good," said he, sarcastically. "Boerhaave says nothing of the sort, but I like a man who quotes readily."

"Laugh, sir, if you like," said I, proudly, "but here is the test of what I say; accept the wager if you dare. I don't quote falsely, like persons who talk of words being Arabic."

So saying, I flung a purse of gold on the table, but Farsetti, who was by no means sure of what he was saying, answered disdainfully that he never betted.

However, Mlle. X— C— V—, enjoying his embarrassment, told him that was the best way never to lose, and began to joke him on his Arabic derivation. For my part, I replaced my purse in my pocket and on some trifling pretext went out and sent my servant to Madame d'Urfé's to get me Boerhaave.

On my return to the room I sat down again at table and joined gaily in the conversation till the return of my messenger with the book. I opened it and, as I had been reading it the evening before, soon found the place I wanted and, giving it to him, begged him to satisfy himself that I had quoted not lightly but exactly. Instead of taking the book, he got up and went out without saying a word.

"He has gone away in a rage," said the mother, "and I would wager anything he will not come back again."

"I wager he will," said the daughter. "He will honour us with his agreeable company before to-morrow's sun has set."

She was right. From that day Farsetti became my determined enemy and let no opportunity slip of convincing me of his hatred.

After dinner we all went to Passy to be present at a concert given by M. de la Popelinière, who had made us stay to supper. I found there Silvia and her charming daughter, who pouted at me and not without cause, as I had neglected her. The famous adept, St. Germain, enlivened the table with his wild tirades so finely delivered. I have never seen a more intellectual or amusing charlatan than he.

Next day I shut myself up to answer a host of questions that Esther had sent me. I took care to answer all those bearing on business matters as obscurely as possible, not only for the credit of the oracle, but also for fear of misleading the father and making him lose money. The worthy man was the most honest of Dutch millionaires, but he might easily make a large hole in his fortune (if he did not absolutely ruin himself) by putting an implicit trust in my infallibility. As for Esther, I confess that she was now no more to me than a pleasant memory.

In spite of my pretence of indifference, my whole heart was given to Mlle. X— C— V— and I dreaded the moment when she would no longer be able to hide her condition from her family. I was sorry for having spoken about the aroph, as three days had gone by without

her mentioning it, and I could not very well reopen the question myself. I was afraid she suspected my motives and that the esteem she professed for me had been replaced by a much less friendly sentiment. I felt that her scorn would be too much for me to bear. So humiliated was I that I could not visit her, and I doubt if I should have seen her again if she had not intervened. She wrote me a note, in which she said I was her only friend and that the only mark of friendship she wanted was that I should come and see her every day, if it were but for a moment. I hastened to take her my reply in my own person and promised not to neglect her, assuring her that at all hazards she might rely on me. I flattered myself that she would mention the aroph, but she did not do so. I concluded that, after thinking it over, she had resolved to think no more about it.

"Would you like me," I said, "to invite your mother and the rest of you to dine with me?"

"I shall be delighted," she replied. "It will be a forbidden pleasure to me before long."

I gave them a dinner both sumptuous and delicate. I had spared no expense to have everything of the best. I had invited Silvia, her charming daughter, an Italian musician named Magali, with whom a sister of Mlle. X— C— V—'s was taken, and the famous bass La Garde. Mlle. X— C— V— was in the highest spirits all the time. Sallies of wit, jests, good stories and enjoyment were the soul of the banquet. We did not separate till midnight and, before leaving, Mlle. X— C— V— found a moment to whisper to me to come and see her early next morning, as she wanted to speak to me on matters of importance.

It will be guessed that I accepted the invitation. I waited on her before eight o'clock. She was very melancholy and told me that she was in despair, that La Popelinière pressed on the marriage, and that her mother persecuted her.

"She tells me that I must sign the contract and that the dressmaker will soon be coming to take my measure for my wedding dress. To that I cannot consent, for a dressmaker would certainly see my situation. I will die rather than confide in my mother or marry before I am delivered."

"There is always time enough to talk about dying," said I, "when all other means have failed. I think you could easily get rid of La Popelinière, who is a man of honour. Tell him how you are situated and he will act without compromising you, as his own interest is sufficiently involved to make him keep the secret."

"But should I be much better off then? And how about my mother?"

"Your mother? Oh! I will make her listen to reason."

"You know not what she is like. The honour of the family would oblige her to get me out of the way, but before that she would make me suffer torments to which death is preferable by far. But why have you said no more about the aroph? Is it not all a jest? That would be a very cruel one."

"On the contrary, I believe it to be infallible, though I have never been a witness of its effects; but what good is it for me to speak to you? You can guess that a delicacy of feeling has made me keep silence. Confide in your lover, who is in Venice; write him a letter and I will take care that it is given into his hands in five or six days by a sure messenger. If he is not well off, I will give you whatever money may be needed for him to come without delay and save your honour and life by giving you the aroph."

"The idea is a good one and the offer generous on your part, but it is not feasible, as you would see if you knew more about my circumstances. Do not think any more of my lover; but supposing I made up my mind to receive the aroph from another, tell me how it could be done. Even if my lover were in Paris, how could he spend an entire week with me, as he would have to? And how could he give me the dose five or six times a day for a week? You see yourself that this remedy is out of the question."

"So you would give yourself to another, if you thought that would save your honour?"

"Certainly, if I were sure that the thing would be kept secret. But where shall I find such a person? Do you think he would be easy to find or that I can go and look for him?"

I did not know what to make of this speech, for she knew I loved her and I did not see why she should put herself to the trouble of going far when what she wanted was to her hand. I was inclined to think that she wanted me to ask her to make choice of myself as the administrator of the remedy, either to spare her modesty or to have the merit of yielding to my love and thus obliging me to be grateful; but I might be wrong and I did not care to expose myself to the humiliation of a refusal. On the other hand I could hardly think she wanted to insult me. Not knowing what to say or which way to turn and wanting to draw an explanation from her, I sighed profoundly, took up my hat and made as if I were going, exclaiming, "Cruel girl, my lot is more wretched than yours!"

She raised herself on the bed and begged me with tears in her eyes to remain and asked me how I could call myself more wretched than she. Pretending to be annoyed and yet full of love for her, I told her that the contempt in which she held me had affected me deeply, since in her necessity she preferred the offices of one who was unknown to her, rather than make use of me.

"You are cruel and unjust," she said, weeping. "I see, for my part, that you love me no longer, since you wish to take advantage of my cruel necessity to gain a triumph over me. This is an act of revenge not worthy of a man of feeling."

Her tears softened me and I fell on my knees before her.

"Since you know, dearest, that I worship you, how can you think me capable of revenging myself on you? Do you think that I can bear to hear you say that, since your lover cannot help you, you do not know where to look for help?"

"But, after refusing you my favours, could I ask this office of you with any decency? Have I not good reason to be afraid that, as I refused to take pity on your love, so you would refuse to take pity on my necessity?"

"Do you think that a passionate lover ceases to love on account of a refusal which may be dictated by virtue? Let me tell you all I think. I confess I once thought you did not love me, but now I am sure of the contrary and that your heart would have led you to satisfy my love, even if you had not been thus situated. I may add that you no doubt feel vexed at my having any doubts of your love."

"You have interpreted my feelings admirably. But how we are to be together with the necessary freedom from observation remains to be seen."

"Do not be afraid. Now that I am sure of your consent, it will not be long before I contrive some plan. In the meanwhile I will go and make the aroph."

I had resolved that, if ever I succeeded in persuading Mlle. X— C— V— to make use of my specific, I would use nothing but honey, so the composition of the aroph would not be a very complicated process. But, if one point was then plain and simple, another remained to be solved and its solution gave me some difficulty. I should have to pass several nights in continual toils. I feared I had promised more than I could perform, and I could not make any abatement without hazarding, not the success of the aroph, but the bliss I had taken such pains to win. Again, as her younger sister slept in the same room with her and close to her, the operation could not be performed there. At last Chance, a divinity which often helps lovers, came to my aid.

Having to go up to the fourth floor, I met the scullion on my way, who guessed where I was going and begged me not to go any farther, as the place was taken.

"But," said I, "you have just come out of there."

"Yes, but I only went in and came out again."

"Then I will wait till the coast is clear."

"For goodness' sake, sir, do not wait!"

"Ah, you rascal! I see what is going on. Well, I will say nothing about it, but I must see her."

"She won't come out, for she heard your steps and shut herself in."

"She knows me, does she?"

"Yes, and you know her."

"All right, get along with you! I won't say anything about it."

He went down and the idea immediately struck me that the adventure might be useful to me. I went up further and through a chink saw Madeleine, Mlle. X— C— V—'s maid. I reassured her and promised to keep the secret, whereon she opened the door and, after I had given her a louis, fled in some embarrassment. Soon after I came down and the scullion who was waiting for me on the landing begged me to make Madeleine give him half the louis.

"I will give you one all to yourself," said I, "if you will tell me the

story"—an offer which pleased the rogue well enough. He told me the tale of his loves and said he always spent the night with her in the garret, but that for three days they had been deprived of their pleasures, as madame had locked the door and taken away the key. I made him show me the place and, looking through the keyhole, I saw that there was plenty of room for a mattress. I gave the scullion a louis and went away to ripen my plans.

It seemed to me that there was no reason why the mistress should not sleep in the garret as well as the maid. I got a picklock and several skeleton keys, put in a tin box several doses of the aroph, that is, some honey mixed with pounded stag's horn to make it thick enough, and the next morning went to the Hôtel de Bretagne and immediately tried my picklock. I could have done without it, as the first skeleton key I tried opened the worn-out lock.

Proud of my idea, I went down to see Mlle. X— C— V— and in a few words told her the plan.

"But," said she, "I should have to go through Madeleine's room to get to the garret."

"In that case, dearest, we must win the girl over."

"Tell her my secret?"

"Just so."

"Oh, I couldn't!"

"I will see to it; the golden key opens all doors."

The girl consented to all I asked her, but the scullion troubled me, for, if he found us out, he might be dangerous. I thought, however, that I might trust to Madeleine, who was a girl of wit, to look after him.

Before going, I told the girl that I wanted to discuss some important matters with her and I told her to meet me in the cloisters of the Augustinian Church. She came at the appointed time and I explained to her the whole plan in all its details. She soon understood me and, after telling me that she would take care to put her own bed in the new kind of boudoir, she added that, to be quite safe, we must make sure of the scullion.

"He is a sharp lad," said Madeleine, "and I think I can answer for him. However, you may leave that to me."

I gave her the key and six louis, bidding her inform her mistress of what we had agreed upon and get the garret ready to receive us. She went away quite merry. A maid who is in love is never so happy as when she can make her mistress protect her intrigues.

Next morning the scullion called on me at my house. The first thing I told him was to take care not to betray himself to my servants and never to come and see me except in a case of necessity. He promised discretion and assured me of his devotion to my service. He gave me the key of the garret and told me he had another. I admired his forethought and gave him a present of six louis, which had more effect on him than the finest words.

Next morning I saw Mlle. X— C— V— only for a moment to warn

her that I should be at the appointed place at ten that evening. I went there early without being seen by anybody. I was in a cloak and carried in my pocket the aroph, flint and steel and a candle. I found a good bed, pillows and a thick coverlet—a very useful provision, as the nights were cold and we should require some sleep in the intervals of the operation.

At eleven a slight noise made my heart begin to beat—always a good sign. I went out and found my mistress by feeling for her and reassured her by a tender kiss. I brought her in, barricaded the door and took care to cover up the keyhole to baffle the curious and, if the worst happened, to avoid a surprise.

On my lighting the candle, she seemed uneasy and said that the light might disclose us if anybody came up to the fourth floor.

"That's not likely," I said, "and besides, we can't do without it, for how am I to give you the aroph in the dark?"

"Very good," she replied, "we can put it out afterwards."

Without staying for those preliminary dallyings which are so sweet when one is at ease, we began with all seriousness to play our part, which we did to perfection. We looked, I like a medical student about to perform an operation, she like a patient—with this difference, that it was the patient who arranged the dressing.

The most laughable part of it all was that we were both as serious as two doctors of divinity.

When the introduction of the aroph was perfect, the timid lady put out the candle, but a few minutes after it had to be lighted again. I told her politely that I was delighted to begin again, and the voice in which I paid her this compliment made us both burst into laughter.

I didn't take so short a time over my second operation as my first and my sweetheart, who had been a little put out, was now quite at her ease. Her modesty had now been replaced by confidence, and, with an affectionate air, she asked if I would not like to rest, as we had still a good deal to do before our work was at an end.

"You see," said I, "that I do not need rest and I think we had better set to again."

No doubt she found my reason a good one, for, without saying anything, she put herself ready to begin again and afterwards we took a good long sleep. When I woke up, feeling as fresh as ever, I asked her to try another operation; and, after carrying this through successfully, I determined to be guided by her and take care of myself, for we had to reserve our energies for the following nights. So, about four o'clock in the morning she left me and softly made her way to her room, and at daybreak I left the hotel under the protection of the scullion, who took me by a private door I did not know of.

About noon, after taking an aromatic bath, I went to call on Mlle. X—C—V—, whom I found sitting up in bed as usual, elegantly attired and with a happy smile on her lips. She spoke at such length on her gratitude and thanked me so often, that, believing myself, and with good cause, to be her debtor, I began to get impatient.

"Is it possible," I said, "that you do not see how degrading your thanks are to me? They prove that you do not love me or that, if you love me, you think my love less strong than yours."

Our conversation then took a tender turn and we were about to seal our mutual ardours without troubling about the aroph when prudence bade us beware. It would not have been safe and we had plenty of time before us. We contented ourselves with a tender embrace till the night should come.

My situation was a peculiar one, for, though I was in love with this charming girl, I did not feel in the least ashamed of having deceived her, especially as what I did could have no effect. It was my self-esteem which made me congratulate myself on the sharp practice which had procured me such pleasures. She told me she was sorry she had denied me when I had asked her before, and said that she felt now that I had good reason to suspect the reality of her love. I did my best to reassure her and, indeed, all suspicions on my part would have been but idle thoughts, as I had succeeded beyond all expectation. However, there is one point upon which I congratulate myself to this day, namely, that during those nightly toils of mine, which did so little towards the object of her desires, I succeeded in inspiring her with such a feeling of resignation that she promised, of her own accord, not to despair any more, but to trust in and be guided by me. She often told me during our nocturnal conversations that she was happy and would continue to be so, even though the aroph had no effect. Not that she had ceased to believe in it, for she continued the application of the harmless preparation.

"Sweetheart," said she, just before we parted finally, "it seems to me that what we have been about is much more likely to create than to destroy." A doctor of the Sorbonne could not have reasoned better.

Three or four days afterwards I found her thoughtful but quiet. She told me that she had lost all hope of getting rid of her burden before the proper time. All the while, however, her mother persecuted her, and she would have to choose in a few days between making a declaration as to her state and signing the marriage contract. She would accept neither of these alternatives and had decided on escaping from her home and asked me to help her in doing so.

I had determined to help her but desired to save my reputation, for it might have been troublesome if it had been absolutely known that I had carried her off or furnished her with the means of escape. And, as for any other alternative, neither of us had any idea of matrimony.

I left her and went to the Tuileries, where a sacred concert was being given. The piece was a motet composed by Mondonville, the words by the Abbé de Voisenon, whom I had furnished with the idea, *The Israelites on Mount Horeb*.

As I was getting out of my carriage, I saw Madame du Romain descending alone from hers. I ran up to her and received a hearty welcome. "I am delighted," said she, "to find you here; it is quite

a piece of luck. I am going to hear this novel composition and have two reserved seats. Will you do me the honour of accepting one?"

Although I had my ticket in my pocket, I could not refuse so honourable an offer, so, giving her my arm, we walked up to two of the best places in the house.

In Paris no talking is allowed during the performance of sacred music, especially when the piece is heard for the first time; so Madame du Romain could draw no conclusions from my silence throughout the performance, but she guessed that something was the matter from the troubled and absent expression of my face, which was by no means natural to me.

"M. Casanova," said she, "be good enough to give me your company for an hour. I want to ask you two or three questions which can be solved only by your cabala. I hope you will oblige me, as I am very anxious to know the answers, but we must be quick as I have an engagement to sup in Paris."

It may be imagined that I did not wait to be asked twice and, as soon as we got to her house, I went to work on the questions and solved them all in less than half an hour.

When I had finished, "M. Casanova," said she, in the kindest manner possible, "what is the matter with you? You are not in your usual state of equanimity, and, if I am not mistaken, you are dreading some dire event. Or perhaps you are on the eve of making some important resolution? I am not inquisitive, but, if I can be of any service to you at Court, make use of me and be sure that I will do my best. If necessary, I will go to Versailles to-morrow morning. I know all the ministers. Confide in me your troubles; if I cannot lighten them, I can at least share them, and be sure I will keep your counsel."

Her words seemed to me a voice from heaven, a warning from my good genius to open my heart to this lady, who had almost read my thoughts and had so plainly expressed her interest in my welfare. After gazing at her for some seconds without speaking, but with a manner that showed her how grateful I was, "Yes, madame," I said, "I am indeed critically situated, maybe on the verge of ruin, but your kindness has calmed my soul and made me once more acquainted with hope. You shall hear how I am placed. I am going to trust you with a secret of the most delicate description, but I can rely on your being as discreet as you are kind. And if, after hearing my story, you deign to give me your advice, I promise to follow it and never to divulge its author."

After this beginning, which gained her close attention, I told her all the circumstances of the case, concealing neither the young lady's name nor any of the circumstances which made it my duty to watch over her welfare. All the same I said nothing about the arroph or the share I had taken in its application. The incident appeared to me too farcical for a serious drama, but I confessed that I had procured the girl drugs, in the hope of relieving her of her burden.

After this weighty communication I stopped and Madame du Romain

remained silent, as if lost in thought, for nearly a quarter of an hour. At last she rose, saying:

"I am expected at Madame de la Marque's and I must go, as I am to meet the Bishop of Montrouge, to whom I want to speak, but I hope I shall eventually be able to help you. Come here the day after to-morrow; you will find me alone; above all, do nothing before you see me. Farewell."

I left her full of hope and resolved to follow her advice and hers only in the troublesome affair in which I was involved.

The Bishop of Montrouge whom she was going to address on an important matter, the nature of which was well known to me, was the Abbé de Voisenon, who was thus named because he often went there. Montrouge is an estate near Paris, belonging to the Duc de la Vallière.

I saw Mlle. X— C— V— the following day and contented myself with telling her that in a couple of days I hoped to give her some good news. I was pleased with her manner, which was full of resignation and trust in my endeavours.

The day after I went to Madame du Romain's punctually at eight. The porter told me I should find the doctor with my lady, but I went upstairs all the same and, as soon as the doctor saw me, he took his leave. His name was Herrenschwand and all the ladies in Paris ran after him. Poor Poinset put him in a little one-act play called *Le Cercle*, which, though of very ordinary merit, was a great success.

"My dear sir," said Madame du Romain, as soon as we were alone, "I have succeeded in my endeavours on your behalf, and it is now for you to keep secret my share in the matter. After I had pondered over the case of conscience you submitted to me, I went to the convent of C—, where the abbess is a friend of mine, and I entrusted her with the secret, relying on her discretion. We agreed that she should receive the young lady in her convent and give her a good lay sister to nurse her through her confinement. Now you will not deny," said she, with a smile, "that the cloisters are of some use. Your young friend must go by herself to the convent with a letter for the abbess, which I will give her and which she must deliver to the porter. She will then be admitted and lodged in a suitable chamber. She will receive no visitors nor any letters that have not passed through my hands. The abbess will bring her answers to me, and I will pass them on to you. You realise that her only correspondent must be yourself and you must receive news of her welfare only through me. On your side, in writing to her, you must leave the address to be filled in by me. I had to tell the abbess the lady's name, but not yours, as she did not require it.

"Tell your young friend all about our plans and, when she is ready, come and tell me and I will give you the letter to the abbess. Tell her to bring nothing but what is strictly necessary, above all no diamonds or trinkets of any value. You may assure her that the abbess will be friendly, will come and see her every now and then, will give

her proper books—in a word, that she will be well looked after. Warn her not to confide in the lay sister who will attend on her. I have no doubt she is an excellent woman, but she is a nun and the secret might leak out. After she is safely delivered, she must go to confession and perform her Easter duties and the abbess will give her a certificate of good behaviour; and she can then return to her mother, who will be too happy to see her to say anything more about the marriage, which, of course, she ought to give as the reason of her leaving home.”

After many expressions of my gratitude to her and of my admiration of her plan, I begged her to give me the letter on the spot, as there was no time to be lost. She was good enough to go at once to her desk, where she wrote as follows:

“My dear Abbess,—The young lady who will give you this letter is the same of whom we have spoken. She wishes to spend three or four months under your protection, to recover her peace of mind, to perform her devotions and to make sure that, when she returns to her mother, nothing more will be said about the marriage which is partly the cause of her temporary separation from her family.”

After reading it to me, she put it into my hands unsealed, that Mlle. X— C— V— might be able to read it. The abbess in question was a princess and her convent was consequently a place above all suspicion. As Madame du Romain gave me the letter, I felt such an impulse of gratitude that I fell on my knees before her. This generous woman was useful to me on another occasion, of which I shall speak later on.

After leaving Madame du Romain, I went straight to the Hôtel de Bretagne, where I saw Mlle. X— C— V— who had only time to tell me that she was engaged for the rest of the day but would come to the garret at eleven o'clock that night and that then we could talk matters over. I was overjoyed at this arrangement, as I foresaw that after this would come the awakening from a happy dream and I should be alone with her no more.

Before leaving the hotel, I gave the word to Madeleine, who in turn got the scullion to have everything in readiness.

I kept the appointment and had not long to wait for my mistress. After letting her read the letter written by Madame du Romain (whose name I withheld from her without her taking offence thereat), I put out the candle and, without troubling about the aroph, we set ourselves to the pleasant task of proving that we truly loved each other.

In the morning, before we separated, I gave her all the instructions I had received from Madame du Romain, and we agreed that she should leave the house at eight o'clock with such things as she absolutely required, that she should take a coach to the Place Maubert, then send it away and take another to the Gate St. Antoine and, farther on, a third coach, in which she was to go to the convent named. I begged her not to forget to burn all the letters she had received from me and to write to me from the convent as often as she could, to seal her letters but to leave the address blank. She promised to

carry out my instructions and then I made her accept a packet of two hundred louis, of which she might chance to be in need. She wept, more for my situation than her own, but I consoled her by saying that I had plenty of money and powerful patrons.

"I will set out," said she, "the day after to-morrow at the hour agreed on." And thereupon, I having promised to come to the house the day after her departure, as if I knew nothing about it and to let her know what passed, we embraced each other tenderly and I left her.

I was troubled in thinking about her fate. She had wit and courage, but, when experience is wanting, excess of spirit often leads men to commit acts of great folly.

The day after the morrow I took a coach and posted myself in a corner of the street by which she had to pass. I saw her come, get out of the coach, pay the coachman, go down a narrow street and a few minutes after reappear again, veiled and hooded, carrying a small parcel in her hand. She then took another conveyance which went off in the direction we had agreed upon.

The day following being Low Sunday, I felt that I must present myself at the Hôtel de Bretagne, for, as I went there every day before the daughter's flight, I could not stop going there without strengthening any suspicions which might be entertained about me. But it was a painful task. I had to appear at my ease and cheerful in a place where I was quite sure all would be sadness and confusion. I must say that it was an affair requiring higher powers of impudence than fall to the lot of most men.

I chose a time when all the family would be together at table, and I walked straight into the dining-room. I entered with my usual cheerful manner and sat down by Madame, a little behind her, pretending not to see her surprise, which, however, was plainly to be seen, her whole face being flushed with rage and astonishment. I had not been long in the room before I asked where her daughter was. She turned round, looked me through and through and said not a word.

"Is she ill?" said I.

"I know nothing about her."

This remark, which was pronounced in a sharp manner, put me at my ease, as I now felt at liberty to look concerned. I sat there for a quarter of an hour, playing the part of grave and astonished silence, and then, rising, I asked if I could do anything, for which all my reward was a cold expression of thanks. I then left the room and went to Mlle. X— C— V—'s chamber as if I had thought she was there, but found only Madeleine. I asked her, with a meaning look, where her mistress was. She replied by begging me to tell her if I knew.

"Did she go out alone?"

"I know nothing at all about it, sir, but they say you know all. I beg of you to leave me."

Pretending to be in the greatest astonishment, I slowly walked away and took a coach, glad to have accomplished this painful duty. After the reception I had met with, I could without affectation pose as

offended and visit the family no more, for, whether I were guilty or innocent, Madame X— C— V— must see that her manner had been plain enough for me to know what it meant.

I was looking out of my window at an early hour two or three days afterwards when a coach stopped before my door and Madame X— C— V—, escorted by M. Farsetti, got out. I made haste to meet them on the stair and welcomed them, saying I was glad they had done me the honour to come and take breakfast with me, pretending not to know of any other reason. I asked them to sit down before the fire and inquired after the lady's health, but, without noticing my question, she said that she had not come to take breakfast, but to have some serious conversation.

"Madame," said I, "I am your humble servant; but first of all, pray be seated."

She sat down, while Farsetti continued standing. I did not press him, but, turning towards the lady, begged her to command me.

"I am come here," she said, "to ask you to give me back my daughter if she be in your power, or to tell me where she is."

"Your daughter, madame? I know nothing about her! Do you think me capable of a crime?"

"I do not accuse you of abducting her; I have not come here to reproach you or to utter threats; I have come only to ask you to show yourself my friend. Help me to get my daughter again this very day; you will give me my life. I am certain you know all. You were her only confidant and her only friend; you passed hours with her every day; she must have told you of her secret. Pity a bereaved mother! So far no one knows the facts; give her back to me, and all shall be forgotten and her honour saved."

"Madame, I feel for you acutely, but I repeat that I know nothing of your daughter."

The poor woman, whose grief touched me, fell at my feet and burst into tears. I was going to lift her from the ground when Farsetti told her, in a voice full of indignation, that she should blush to humble herself in such a manner before a man of my description. I drew myself up and, looking at him scornfully, said, "You insolent scoundrel! What do you mean by talking of me like that?"

"Everybody is certain that you know all about it."

"Then they are impudent fools, like you. Get out of my house this instant and wait for me; I will be with you in a quarter of an hour."

So saying, I took the poor chevalier by the shoulders and, giving him sundry shakes, turned him out of the room. He came back and called to the lady to come, too, but she rose and tried to quiet me.

"You ought to be more considerate towards a lover," said she, "for he would marry my daughter now, even after what she has done."

"I am aware of the fact, madame, and I have no doubt that his courtship was one of the chief reasons which made your daughter resolve to leave her home, for she hated him even more than she hated the *fermier-général*."

"She has behaved very badly, but I promise not to say anything more about marrying her. But I am sure you know all about it, as you gave her fifty louis, without which she could not have done anything."

"Nay, not so."

"Do not deny it, sir; here is the evidence—a small piece of your letter to her."

She gave me a scrap of the letter I had sent the daughter with the fifty louis for her brother. It contained the following lines:

"I hope that these wretched fifty louis will convince you that I am ready to sacrifice everything, my life if need be, to assure you of my affection."

"I am far from disavowing this evidence of my esteem for your daughter, but, to justify myself, I am obliged to tell you a fact which I should have otherwise kept secret, namely, that I furnished your daughter with this sum to enable her to pay your son's debts, for which he thanked me in a letter which I can show you."

"My son?"

"Your son, madame."

"I will make you an ample atonement for my suspicions."

Before I had time to make any objection, she ran down to fetch Farsetti, who was waiting in the courtyard, and made him come up and hear what I had just told her.

"That's not a likely tale," said the insolent fellow.

I looked at him contemptuously and told him he was not worth convincing, but that I would beg the lady to ask her son and see whether I was telling the truth.

"I assure you," I added, "that I always urged your daughter to marry M. de la Popelinière."

"How can you have the face to say that," said Farsetti, "when you talk in the letter of your affection?"

"I do not deny it," said I. "I loved her and was proud of my affection for her. This affection, of whatever sort it may have been—and that is not this gentleman's business—was the ordinary topic of conversation between us. If she had told me she was going to leave her home, I should either have dissuaded her or gone with her, for I loved her as I do at this moment; but I would never have given her money to go alone."

"My dear Casanova," said the mother, "if you will help me to find her, I shall believe in your innocence."

"I shall be delighted to aid you, and I promise to commence the quest to-day."

"As soon as you have any news, come and tell me."

"You may trust me to do so," said I, and we parted.

I had to play my part carefully; especially it was essential that I should behave in public in a manner consistent with my professions. Accordingly, the next day I went to M. Chaban, first commissary of police, requesting him to institute inquiries respecting the flight of

Mlle. X— C— V—. I was sure that in this way the real part I had taken in the matter would be the better concealed; but the commissary, who had the true spirit of his profession and had liked me when he first saw me six years before, began to laugh when he heard what I wanted him to do.

"Do you really want the police to discover," said he, "where the pretty Englishwoman is to be found?"

"Certainly."

It then struck me that he was trying to make me talk and to catch me tripping, and I had no doubt of it when I met Farsetti going in as I was coming out.

Next day I went to acquaint Madame X— C— V— with the steps I had taken, though as yet my efforts had not been crowned with success.

"I have been more fortunate than you," said she, "and, if you will come with me to the place where my daughter has gone, and will join me in persuading her to return, all will be well."

"Certainly," said I. "I shall be most happy to accompany you."

Taking me at my word, she put on her cloak and, leaning on my arm, walked along till we came to a coach. She then gave me a slip of paper, begging me to tell the coachman to drive us to the address thereon.

I was on pins and needles and my heart was beating fast, for I thought I should have to read out the address of the convent. I do not know what I should have done if my fears had been well grounded, but I should certainly not have gone to the convent. At last I read what was written; it was "Place Maubert," and I grew calm once more.

I told the coachman to drive us to the Place Maubert. We set off and in a short time stopped at the opening of an obscure back street before a dirty-looking house, which did not give one a high idea of the character of its occupants. I gave Madame X— C— V— my arm, and she had the satisfaction of looking into every room in the five floors of the house, but what she sought for was not there, and I expected to see her overwhelmed with grief. I was mistaken, however. She looked distressed but satisfied, and her eyes seemed to ask pardon of me. She had found out from the coachman, who had taken her daughter on the first stage of her journey, that she had alighted in front of the house in question and had gone down the back street. She told me that the scullion had confessed he had taken me letters twice from his young mistress, and that Madeleine kept saying that she was sure her mistress and I were in love with each other. They played their parts well.

As soon as I had seen Madame X— C— V— safely home, I went to Madame du Romain to tell her what had happened, and I then wrote to my fair recluse, telling her what had gone on in the world since her disappearance.

Three or four days after this date Madame du Romain gave me

the first letter I received from Mlle. X— C— V—. She spoke in it of the quiet life she was leading and her gratitude to me, praised the abbess and the lay sister and gave me the titles of the books they lent her, which she enjoyed reading. She also informed me what money she had spent and said she was happy in everything, almost in being forbidden to leave her room.

I was delighted with her letter, but much more with the abbess's epistle to Madame du Romain. She was evidently fond of the girl and could not say too much in her praise, saying how sweet-tempered, clever and lady-like she was, winding up by assuring her friend that she went to see her every day.

I was charmed to see the pleasure this letter afforded Madame du Romain, pleasure which was increased by the perusal of the letter I had received. The only persons who were displeased were the poor mother, the frightful Farsetti and the old *fermier*, whose misfortune was talked about in the clubs, the Palais Royal, and the coffee-houses. Everybody put me down for some share in the business, but I laughed at their gossip, believing that I was quite safe.

All the same, La Popelinière took the adventure philosophically and made a one-act play out of it, which he had acted at his little theatre in Paris. Three months afterwards he got married to a very pretty girl, the daughter of a Bordeaux alderman. He died in the course of two years, leaving his widow pregnant with a son, who came into the world six months after the father's death. The unworthy heir to the rich man had the face to accuse the widow of adultery and got the child declared illegitimate, to the eternal shame of the court which gave this iniquitous judgment and to the grief of every honest Frenchman. The iniquitous nature of the judgment was afterwards more clearly demonstrated—putting aside the fact that nothing could be said against the mother's character—by the same court having the face to declare a child born eleven months after the father's death legitimate.

I continued for ten days to call upon Madame X— C— V—, but finding myself coldly welcomed, decided to go there no more.

CHAPTER 63

Mlle. X— C— V— had now been in the convent for a month and her affair had ceased to be a common topic of conversation. I thought I should hear no more of it, but I was mistaken. I continued, however, to amuse myself, and my pleasure in spending freely quite prevented me from thinking about the future. The Abbé de Bernis, whom I went to see regularly once a week, told me one day that the comptroller-general often inquired how I was getting on. "You do wrong to neglect him," said the abbé. He advised me to say no more about my claims, but to communicate to him the means I had spoken of for increasing the revenues of the state. I laid too great store by the advice of the man who had made my fortune not to follow it. I went to the comp-

troller and, trusting in his probity, explained my scheme to him. This was to pass a law by which every estate, except that left by father to son, should furnish the treasury with one year's income, every deed of gift formally drawn up being subject to the same provision. It seemed to me that this law could not give offence to anyone; the heir had only to imagine that he had inherited a year later than was actually the case. The minister was of the same opinion as myself, told me that there would not be the slightest difficulty involved and assured me that my fortune was made. A week afterwards his place was taken by M. de Silhouette and, when I called on the new minister, he told me coldly that, when my scheme became law, he would tell me. It became law two years afterwards and, when, as the originator of the scheme, I attempted to get my just reward, they laughed in my face.

Shortly after the Pope died and was succeeded by the Venetian Rezzonico, who created my patron, the Abbé de Bernis, a cardinal. However, he had to go into exile by order of the King two days after His Gracious Majesty had presented him with the red cap—so good a thing it is to be the friend of kings!

The disgrace of my delightful abbé left me without a patron, but I had plenty of money and so was enabled to bear this misfortune with resignation.

For having undone all the work of Cardinal Richelieu, for having changed the old enmity between France and Austria into friendship, for delivering Italy from the horrors of war which befell her whenever these countries had a bone to pick, although he was the first cardinal made by a pope who had plenty of opportunities for discovering his character, merely because, on being asked, he had given it as his opinion that the Prince of Soubise was not a fit person to command the French armies, this great ecclesiastic was driven into exile. The moment the Pompadour heard of this opinion of his, she decreed his banishment—a sentence which was unpopular with all classes of society; but they consoled themselves with epigrams, and the new cardinal was soon forgotten. Such is the character of the French people; it cares neither for its own misfortunes nor for those of others if only it can extract laughter from them.

In my time epigrammatists and poetasters who assailed ministers or even the King's mistresses were sent to the Bastille, but the wits still persisted in being amusing, and there were some who considered a jest incomplete that was not followed by a persecution. A man whose name I have forgotten, a great lover of notoriety, appropriated the following verses by the younger Crébillon, and went to the Bastille rather than disown them:

All the world's turned upside down!
Jupiter has donned the gown (the King).
Venus mounts the council stair (the Pompadour).
Plutus trifles with the fair (M. de Boulogne).

Mercury in mail is dressed (Maréchal de Richelieu).
Mighty Mars has turned a priest (the Duc de Clermont, abbé
of St.-Germain-des-Prés).

Crébillon, who was not the sort of man to conceal his writings, told the Duc de Choiseul that he had written some verses exactly like these but that it was possible the prisoner had been inspired with precisely the same ideas. This jest was applauded and the author of *The Sofa* was let alone. Cardinal de Bernis passed ten years in exile, *procul negotiis*, but he was not happy, as he told me himself when I met him in Rome fifteen years afterwards. It is said that it is better to be a minister than a king, an opinion which seems ridiculous when it is analysed. The question is, which is the better, independence or its contrary? The axiom may possibly be verified in a despotic government under an absurd, weak or careless king who serves as a mere mask for his master, the minister; but in all other cases it is an absurdity.

Cardinal de Bernis was never recalled; there is no instance of Louis XV having ever recalled a minister whom he had disgraced; but on the death of Rezzonico he had to go to Rome to be present at the conclave and there he remained as French ambassador.

About this time Madame d'Urfé conceived a wish to make the acquaintance of J.-J. Rousseau, and we went to call upon him at Montmorency, on the pretext of giving him music to copy, an occupation in which he was very skilled. He was paid twice the sum given to any other copyist, but he guaranteed that the work should be faultlessly done. At that period of his life copying music was the great writer's sole means of subsistence.

We found him to be a man of a simple and modest demeanour, who talked well but was not otherwise distinguished either intellectually or physically. We did not think him what would be called a good-natured man and, as he was far from having the manners of good society, Madame d'Urfé did not hesitate to pronounce him vulgar. We saw the woman with whom he lived and of whom we had heard, but she scarcely looked at us. On our way home we amused ourselves by talking about Rousseau's eccentric habits.

I will here note down the visit of the Prince of Conti (father of the gentleman who is now known as the Comte de la Marche) to Rousseau.

The prince—a good-natured man—went by himself to Montmorency, on purpose to spend a day in conversation with the philosopher, who was even then famous. He found him in the park, accosted him and said that he had come to dine with him and to talk without restraint.

"Your Highness will fare but badly," said Rousseau. "However, I will tell them to lay another knife and fork."

The philosopher gave his instructions and came out and rejoined the prince, with whom he walked up and down for two or three hours.

When it was dinner-time, he took the prince into his dining-room, where the table was laid for three.

"Who is going to dine with us?" said the prince. "I thought we were to be alone."

"The third party," said Rousseau, "is my other self—a being who is neither my wife nor my mistress nor my servant-maid nor my mother nor my daughter, but yet personates all these characters at once."

"I daresay, my dear fellow, I daresay; but, as I came to dine with you alone, I will not dine with your other self, but will leave you with all the rest of you to keep you company."

So saying, the prince bade him farewell and went out. Rousseau did not try to keep him.

About this time I witnessed the failure of a play called *Aristides' Daughter*, written by the ingenious Madame de Graffigny, who died of vexation five days after her play was damned. The Abbé de Voisenon was horrified, as he had advised the lady to produce it and was thought to have had some hand in its composition, as well as in that of the *Lettres Péruviennes* and *Cénie*. By a curious coincidence, just about the same date, Rezzonico's mother died of joy because her son had become Pope. Grief and joy kill many more women than men, which proves that, if women have more feeling than men, they have also less strength.

When Madame d'Urfé thought that my adopted son was comfortably settled in Viar's house, she made me go with her and pay him a visit. I found him lodged like a prince, well dressed, made much of and almost looked up to. I was astonished, for this was more than I had bargained for. Madame d'Urfé had given him masters of all sorts and a pretty little pony for him to learn riding on. He was styled M. le Comte d'Aranda. A girl of sixteen, Viar's daughter, a fine-looking young woman, was appointed to look after him and she was quite proud to call herself my lord's governess. She assured Madame d'Urfé that she took special care of him; that, as soon as he woke, she brought him his breakfast in bed; that she then dressed him and did not leave his side the whole day. Madame d'Urfé approved of everything, told the girl to take even greater care of the count and promised that she should not go unrewarded. As for the young gentleman, he was evidently quite happy, as he told me himself again and again, but I suspected a mystery somewhere and determined that I would go and see him by myself another time and solve it.

On our journey home I told Madame d'Urfé how grateful I was for all her goodness to the boy and that I approved of all the arrangements that had been made with the exception of the name Aranda, "which," said I, "may some day prove a thorn in his side." She answered that the lad had said enough to convince her that he had a right to bear that name. "I had," she said, "in my desk a seal with the arms of the house of Aranda, and, happening to take it up, I showed it him as we show trinkets to children to amuse them, but, as soon as he saw it, he burst out, 'How came you to have my arms?'"

'Your arms!' I answered. 'I got this seal from the Comte d'Aranda; how can you prove that you are a scion of that race?' 'Do not ask me, madame; my birth is a secret I can reveal to no one'."

The imposition and, above all, the impudence of the young knave astounded me. I should not have thought him capable of it, and a week after I went to see him by myself to get at the bottom of all this mystery.

I found my young count with Viar, who, judging by the awe the child showed of me, must have thought he belonged to me. He was unsparing in his praises of his pupil, saying that he played the flute capitally, danced and fenced admirably, rode well and wrote a good hand. He showed me the pens he had cut himself with three, five and even nine points and begged me to examine him on heraldry, which, as the master observed, was so necessary a science for young noblemen.

The young gentleman then commenced in the jargon of heraldry to blazon his own pretended arms, and I felt much inclined to burst into laughter, partly because I did not understand a word he said and partly because he seemed to think the matter as important as would a country squire with his thirty-two quarters. However, I was delighted to see his dexterity in penmanship, which was undoubtedly very great, and I expressed my satisfaction to Viar, who soon left us to ourselves. We proceeded into the garden.

"Will you kindly inform me," I said, "how you can be so foolish as to call yourself the Comte d'Aranda?"

He replied, with the utmost calmness, "I know it is foolish, but leave me my title; it is of service to me here and gains me respect."

"It is an imposition I cannot wink at, as it may be fraught with serious results and may do harm to both of us. I should not have thought that at your age you would be capable of such a knavish trick. I know you did it out of stupidity, but after a certain limit stupidity becomes criminal; and I cannot see how I am to remedy your fault without disgracing you in the eyes of Madame d'Urfé."

I kept on scolding him till he burst into tears, saying, "I had rather have the shame of being sent back to my mother than that of confessing to Madame d'Urfé that I had imposed on her; and I could not bear to stay here if I had to give up my name."

Seeing that I could do nothing with him, unless, indeed, I sent him to some place far removed from Paris, under his proper name, I told him to take comfort, as I would try to do the best I could for both of us.

"And now tell me—and take care to tell the truth—what sort of feelings does Viar's daughter entertain for you?"

"I think, papa, that this is a case in which the reserve commended by yourself, as well as by mother, would be appropriate."

"Yes, that sort of answer tells me a good deal, but I think you are rather too knowing for your age. And you may as well observe that, when you are called upon for a confession, reserve is out of place and it's a confession I require from you."

"Well, papa, Viar's daughter is very fond of me and shows me her love in all sorts of ways."

"And do you love her?"

"Oh, yes!"

"Is she much with you in the morning?"

"She is with me the whole day."

"She is present when you go to bed?"

"Yes, she helps me undress."

"Nothing else?"

"I do not care to tell you."

I was astonished at the measured way in which he answered me, and, as I had heard enough to guess that the boy and girl were very good friends indeed, I contented myself with warning him to take care of his health, and with this I left him.

Some time after my thoughts were occupied with a business speculation which all my calculations assured me would be extremely profitable. The plan was to produce on silks, by means of printing, the exquisite designs which are produced at Lyons by the tedious process of weaving, and thus to give customers excellent value at much lower prices. I had the requisite knowledge of chemistry and enough capital to make the thing a success. I obtained the assistance of a man with the necessary technical skill and knowledge, intending to make him my manager.

I told my plan to the Prince de Conti, who encouraged me to persevere, promising me his patronage and all the privileges I could wish for. That decided me to begin.

I rented a very large house near the Temple for a thousand crowns per annum. The house contained a spacious hall, in which I meant to put my workmen; another hall which was to be the stockroom; numerous rooms for my workpeople to live in; and a nice room for myself in case I cared to live on the premises.

I made the scheme into a company with thirty shares, of which I gave five to my designer, keeping the remaining twenty-five to distribute to those who were inclined to join the company. I gave one to a doctor who, on giving surety, became the storekeeper and came to live in the house with his whole family; and I engaged four servants, a waiting-maid, and a porter. I had to give another share to an accountant, who furnished me with two clerks, who also took up their abode in the house. The carpenters, blacksmiths and painters worked hard from morning to night and in less than three weeks the place was ready. I told the manager to engage twenty girls to paint, who were to be paid every Saturday. I stocked the warehouse with three hundred pieces of sarcenet and camlet of different shades and colours to receive the designs, and I paid for everything in ready money.

I had made an approximate calculation with my manager that I should have to spend three hundred thousand francs and that would not break me. If the worst happened, I could fall back on my shares, which produced a good income, but I hoped I should not be compelled

to do this, as I wanted to have an income of two hundred thousand francs a year.

All the while I did not conceal from myself that the speculation might be my ruin, if custom did not come in, but, on looking at my beautiful materials, these fears were dispelled, especially as I heard everybody saying that I sold them much too cheap.

To set up the business I spent in the course of a month about sixty thousand francs and my weekly expenses amounted to twelve hundred francs.

As for Madame d'Urfé, she laughed every time she saw me, for she was quite certain that this business was only meant to put the curious off the scent and to preserve my *incognito*, so persuaded was she of my omnipotence.

The sight of twenty girls, all more or less pretty, the eldest of whom was not twenty-five, far from making me tremble as it ought, delighted me. I fancied myself in the midst of a seraglio; I amused myself by watching their meek and modest looks as they did their work under the direction of the foreman. The best paid did not get more than twenty-four sous a day and all of them had excellent reputations, for they had been selected at her own request by the manager's wife, a devout woman of ripe age, whom I hoped to find obliging if the fancy seized me to test her choice. Manon Baletti did not share my satisfaction in them. She trembled to see me the owner of a harem, well knowing that sooner or later the barque of my virtue would run on the rocks. She scolded me well about these girls, though I assured her that none of them slept in the house.

This business increased my own ideas of my importance, partly from the thought that I was on the high road to fortune and partly because I furnished so many people with the means of subsistence. Alas! I was too fortunate and my evil genius soon crossed my career.

It was now three months since Mlle. X— C— V— had gone into the convent and the time of her delivery drew near. We wrote to each other twice a week and I considered the matter happily settled; M. de la Popelinière had married, and, when Mlle. X— C— V— should return to her mother, there would be nothing more to be said. But just at this period, when my happiness seemed assured, the hidden fire leapt forth and threatened to consume me—how, the reader will see.

One day, after leaving Madame d'Urfé's, I went to walk in the Tuileries. I had taken a couple of turns in the chief walk when I saw that an old woman, accompanied by a man dressed in black, was looking at me closely and communicating her observations to her companion. There was nothing very astonishing in this in a public place, and I continued my walk and, on turning again, saw the same couple still watching me. In my turn I looked at them and remembered seeing the man in a gaming house, where he was known by the name of Castel-Bajac. On scrutinising the features of the hag, I at last succeeded in recollecting who she was; she was the woman to whom I had taken Mlle. X— C— V—. I felt certain that she had recognised

me, but, not troubling myself about the matter, I left the gardens to walk elsewhere. The day after next, just as I was going to get into my carriage, a man of evil aspect gave me a paper and asked me to read it. I opened it but, finding it covered with an illegible scrawl, I gave it him back, telling him to read it himself. He did so and I found myself summoned to appear before the commissary of police to answer to the plea which the midwife (whose name I forget) brought against me.

Although I could guess what the charge would be and was certain that the midwife could furnish no proofs of her accusation, I went to an attorney I knew and told him to appear for me. I instructed him that I did not know any midwife in Paris whatsoever. The attorney waited on the commissary and on the day after brought me a copy of the pleas.

The midwife said that I had come to her one night, accompanied by a young lady about five months with child, and that, holding a pistol in one hand and a packet of fifty louis in the other, I made her promise to procure abortion. We both of us, so she said, had masks on, thus showing that we had been at the opera ball. Fear, she said, had prevented her from flatly refusing to grant my request; but she had enough presence of mind to say that the necessary drugs were not ready, that she would have all in order by the next night, whereupon we left, promising to return. In the belief that we would not fail to keep the appointment, she went in to M. Castel-Bajac to ask him to hide in the next room, that she might be protected from my fury and that he might be a witness of what I said, but she had not seen me again. She added that she would have given information the day after the event if she had known who I was, but, since M. Castel-Bajac had told her my name on her recognising me in the Tuileries, she had thought it her bounden duty to deliver me to the law, that she might be compensated for the violence I had used toward her. And this document was signed by the said Castel-Bajac as a witness.

"This is an evident case of libel," said my attorney, "at least, if she can't prove the truth of her allegations. My advice to you is to take the matter before the criminal lieutenant, who will be able to give you the satisfaction you require."

I authorised him to do what he thought advisable, and three or four days after he told me that the lieutenant wished to speak to me in private and would expect me the same day at three o'clock in the afternoon.

As will be expected, I was punctual to the appointment. I found the magistrate to be a polite and good-hearted gentleman. He was, in fact, the well known M. de Sartine, who was the chief of police two years later. His office of criminal lieutenant was salable and M. de Sartine sold it when he was appointed head of the police.

As soon as I had made my bow, he asked me to sit down by him and addressed me as follows:

"I have asked you to call upon me in the interests of both of us,

as in your position our interests are inseparable. If you are innocent of the charge which has been brought against you, you are quite right to appeal to me; but, before proceedings begin, you should tell me the whole truth. I am ready to forget my position as judge and to give you my help, but you must see yourself that, to prove the other side guilty of slander, you must prove yourself innocent. What I want from you is an informal and strictly confidential declaration, for the case against you is a serious one and of such a kind as to require all your efforts to wipe off this blot upon your honour. Your enemies will not respect your delicacy of feeling. They will press you so hard that you will be obliged either to submit to a shameful sentence or to wound your feelings of honour in proving your innocence. You see I am confiding in you, for in certain cases honour seems so precious a thing to me that I am ready to defend it with all the power of the law. Pay me back, then, in the same coin, trust in me entirely, tell me the whole story without any reserves and you may rely upon my good offices. All will be well if you are innocent, for I shall not be the less a judge because I am your friend; but, if you are guilty, I am sorry for you, for I warn you that I shall be just."

After doing my best to express my gratitude to him, I said that my position did not oblige me to make any reservations on account of honour and that I had, consequently, no informal statement to make him.

"The midwife," I added, "is absolutely unknown to me. She is most likely an abandoned woman who with her worthy companion wants to cheat me of my money."

"I shall be delighted to think so," he answered, "but admitting the fact, see how chance favours her and makes it a most difficult thing for you to prove your innocence."

"The young lady disappeared three months ago. She was known to be your intimate friend, you called upon her at all hours; you spent a considerable time with her the day before she disappeared and no one knows what has become of her; but everyone's suspicions point at you and paid spies are continually dogging your steps. The midwife sent me a requisition yesterday by her counsel, Vauversin. She says that the pregnant lady you brought to her house is the same whom Madame X— C— V— is searching for. She also says that you both wore black dominoes and the police have ascertained that you were both at the ball in black dominoes on the same night as that on which the midwife says you came to her house; you are also known to have left the ballroom together. All this, it is true, does not constitute full proof of your guilt, but it makes one tremble for your innocence."

"What cause have I to tremble?"

"What cause? Why a false witness, easily enough hired for a little money, might swear with impunity that he saw you come from the opera together, and a coachman in the same way might swear he had taken you to the midwife's. In that case I should be compelled to order your arrest and examination, with a view to ascertain the name

of the person whom you took with you. Do you realise that you are accused of procuring abortion, that three months have gone by without the lady's retreat having been discovered, that she is said to be dead? Do you realise, in short, what a very serious charge murder is?"

"Certainly; but, if I die innocent, you will have condemned me wrongly and will be more to be pitied than I."

"Yes, yes, but that wouldn't make your case any better. You may be sure that I will not condemn an innocent man, but I am afraid that you will be a long time in prison before you succeed in proving your innocence. To be brief, you see that in twenty-four hours the case looks very bad, and in the course of a week it might look very much worse. My interest was aroused in your favour by the evident absurdity of the accusations, but it is the other circumstances about the case which make it a serious one for you. I can partly understand the circumstances and the feelings of love and honour which bid you be silent. I decided to have a talk with you and I hope you will have no reserves with me. I will spare you all the unpleasant circumstances which threaten you, believing, as I do, that you are innocent. Tell me all and be sure that the lady's honour will not suffer; but if, on the other hand, you are unfortunately guilty of the crimes laid to your charge, I advise you to be prudent and to take steps which it is not my business to suggest. I warn you that in three or four days I shall cite you to the bar of the court and that you will then find in me only the judge—just, certainly, but severe and impartial."

I was petrified, for these words showed me my danger in all its nakedness. I saw how I should esteem this worthy man's good offices and said to him, in quite another tone, that, innocent as I was, I saw that my best course was to throw myself on his kindness respecting Mlle. X— C— V— who had committed no crime but would lose her reputation by this unhappy business.

"I know where she is," I added, "and I may tell you that she would never have left her mother if they had not endeavoured to force her into a marriage she abhorred."

"Well, but the man is now married; let her return to her mother's house and you will be safe, unless the midwife persists in maintaining that you incited her to procure abortion."

"There is no abortion in the matter, but other reasons prevent her returning to her family. I can tell you no more without obtaining the consent of another party. If I succeed in doing so, I shall be able to throw the desired light on the question. Be kind enough to give me a second hearing on the day after to-morrow."

"I understand. I shall be delighted to hear what you have to say. I thank and congratulate you. Farewell!"

I was on the brink of the precipice, but I was determined to leave the kingdom rather than betray the honour of my poor dear sweetheart. If it had been possible, I would gladly have put an end to the case with money, but it was too late. I was sure that Farsetti had the chief hand in all this trouble, that he was continually on my track

and that he was paying the spies mentioned by M. de Sartine. He it was who had set Vauversin, the barrister, after me and I had no doubt that he would do all in his power to ruin me.

I felt that my only course was to tell the whole story to M. de Sartine, but to do that I required Madame du Romain's permission.

CHAPTER 64

THE day after my interview with M. de Sartine I waited on Madame du Romain at an early hour. Considering the urgency of the case I took the liberty of rousing her from her slumbers, and, as soon as she was ready to receive me, I told her all.

"There can be no hesitation in the matter," said this delightful woman. "We must make a confidant of M. de Sartine and I will speak to him myself to-day without fail."

Forthwith she went to her desk and wrote to the criminal lieutenant, asking him to see her at three o'clock in the afternoon. In less than an hour the servant returned with a note in which he said he would expect her. We agreed that I should come again in the evening, when she would tell me the result of her interview.

I went to the house at five o'clock and had only a few minutes to wait.

"I have concealed nothing," said she. "He knows that she is on the eve of her confinement and that you are not the father, which speaks highly for your generosity. I told him that, as soon as the confinement was over and the young lady had recovered her health, she would return to her mother, though she would make no confession, and that the child should be well looked after. You have now nothing to fear and can calm yourself; but, as the case must go on, you will be cited before the court the day after to-morrow. I advise you to see the clerk of the court on some pretext or other and to make him accept a sum of money."

I was summoned to appear, and I appeared. I saw M. de Sartine, *sedentem pro tribunali*. At the end of the sitting he told me that he was obliged to remand me and that during my remand I must not leave Paris or get married, as all my civil rights were in suspense pending the decision. I promised to follow his commands.

I acknowledged in my examination that I was at the ball in a black domino on the night named in my accusation, but I denied everything else. As for Mlle. X— C— V—, I said that neither I nor anyone of her family had had any suspicion that she was with child.

Recollecting that I was an alien and that this circumstance might make Vauversin call for my arrest on the plea that I might fly the kingdom, I thought the moment opportune for making interest with the clerk of the court, and I accordingly paid him a visit. After telling him of my fears, I slipped into his hand a packet of three hundred louis, for which I did not ask for a receipt, saying that they were to

defray expenses if I were mulcted in costs. He advised me to require the midwife to give bail for her appearance and I told my attorney to do so, but four days after the following incident took place:

I was talking in the Temple Gardens when I was accosted by a Savoyard, who gave me a note in which I was informed that somebody in an alley, fifty paces off, wanted to speak to me. "Either a love affair or a challenge," I said to myself. "Let's see." I stopped my carriage, which was following me, and went to the place.

I cannot say how surprised I was to see the wretched Castel-Bajac standing before me. "I have only a word to say," said he, when he saw me. "We will not be overheard here. The midwife is quite sure that you are the man who brought a pregnant lady to her, but she is vexed that you are accused of making away with her. Give her a hundred louis; she will then declare to the court that she has been mistaken and your trouble will be ended. You need not pay the money till she has made her declaration; we will take your word for it. Come with me and talk it over with Vauversin. I am sure he will persuade you to do as I suggest. I know where to find him; follow me at some distance."

I had listened to him in silence and was delighted to see that the rascals were betraying themselves. "Very good," said I to the fellow, "you go on, and I will follow." I went after him to the third floor of a house in the Rue aux Ours, where I found Vauversin, the barrister. No sooner had I arrived than he went to business without any prefatory remarks.

"The midwife," he said, "will call on you with a witness, apparently with the intention of maintaining to your face that you are her man; *but she won't be able to recognise you*. She will then proceed with the witness to the court and will declare that she has made a mistake and the criminal lieutenant will forthwith put an end to the proceedings. You will thus be certain of gaining your case against the lady's mother."

I thought the plan well conceived, and said that they would find me at the Temple any day up to noon.

"But the midwife needs a hundred louis."

"You mean that the worthy woman rates her perjury at that price. Well, never mind, I will pay the money and you may trust to my word; but I can't do so before she has taken oath to her mistake before the court."

"Very good, but you must first give me twenty-five louis to reimburse me for my costs and fees."

"Certainly, if you will give me a formal receipt for the money."

He hesitated at first, but, after talking it over, the money proved too strong a bait and he wrote out the receipt and I gave him twenty-five louis. He thanked me and said that, though Madame X— C— V— was his client, he would let me know confidentially how best to put a stop to the proceedings. I thanked him with as much gratitude as

if I had really intended to make use of his services, and I left to write and tell M. de Sartine what had taken place.

Three days afterwards I was told that a man and woman wanted to see me. I went down and asked the woman what she wanted.

"I want to speak to M. Casanova."

"I am he."

"Then I have made a mistake, for which I hope you will forgive me."

Her companion smiled and they went off.

The same day Madame du Romain had a letter from the abbess telling her that her young friend had given birth to a fine boy, who had been sent away to a place where he would be well looked after. She stated that the young lady could not leave the convent for the next six weeks, at the end of which time she could return to her mother with a certificate which would protect her from all annoyance.

Soon after the midwife was put in solitary confinement, Castel-Bajac was sent to the Bicêtre and Vauversin's name was struck off the rolls. The suit instituted against me by Madame X— C— V— went on till her daughter reappeared, but I knew that I had nothing to fear. The girl returned to her mother about the end of August, armed with a certificate from the abbess, who said she had been under her protection for four months, during which time she had never left the convent nor seen any persons from outside. This was perfectly true, but the abbess added that her only reason for her going back to her family was that she had nothing more to dread from the attentions of M. de la Popelinière and in this the abbess lied.

Mlle. X— C— V— took advantage of the delight of her mother in seeing her again safe and sound and made her wait on M. de Sartine with the abbess's certificate, stop all proceedings against me and withdraw all the charges she had made. Her daughter told her that, if I liked, I might claim damages for libel and that, if she did not wish to injure her daughter's reputation, she would say nothing more about what had happened.

The mother wrote me a letter of the most satisfactory character, which I had registered in court, thus putting an end to the prosecution. In my turn I wrote to congratulate her on the recovery of her daughter, but I never set foot in her house again, to avoid any disagreeable scenes with Farsetti.

Mlle. X— C— V— could not stay any longer in Paris, where her tale was known to everyone, and Farsetti took her to Brussels with her maid Madeleine. Some time after her mother followed her and they went on to Venice and there in three years' time she became a great lady. Fifteen years afterwards I saw her again, and she was a widow, happy enough apparently and enjoying a great reputation on account of her rank, wit and social qualities, but our connection was never renewed.

In four years the reader will hear more of Castel-Bajac. Towards

the end of the same year 1759, before I went to Holland, I spent several hundred francs to obtain the release of the midwife.

I lived like a prince and men might have thought me happy, but I was not. The enormous expenses I incurred, my love of spending money and of magnificent pleasures warned me, in spite of myself, that there were rocks ahead. My business would have kept me going for a long time if custom had not been paralysed by the war; but, as it was, I, like everybody else, experienced the effect of bad times. My warehouse contained four hundred pieces of stuffs with designs on them, but, as I could not hope to dispose of them before the peace and as peace seemed a long way off, I was threatened with ruin.

With this fear I wrote to Esther to get her father to give me the remainder of my money, to send me a sharp clerk and to join in my speculation. M. d'O— said that, if I would set up in Holland, he would become responsible for everything and give me half the profits, but I liked Paris too well to agree to so good an offer. I was sorry for it afterwards.

I spent a good deal of money on my country house, but the chief expense of my life, which was unknown to others but which was ruining me, was incurred in connection with the girls who worked in my establishment. With my disposition and my pronounced liking for variety, a score of girls, nearly all of them pretty and seductive, as most Parisian girls are, was a reef on which my virtue made shipwreck every day. Curiosity had a good deal to do with it and they profited by my impatience to take possession by selling their favours dearly. They all followed the example of the first favourite and every one claimed in turn an establishment, furniture, money and jewels, and I knew too little of the value of money to care how much they asked. My fancy never lasted longer than a week and often waned in three or four days, and the last-comer always appeared the most worthy of my attentions.

As soon as I had made a new choice, I saw no more of my old loves but continued to provide for them, and that with a good deal of money. Madame d'Urfé, who thought I was rich, gave me no trouble. I made her happy by using my oracle to second the magical ceremonies of which she grew fonder every day, although she never attained her aim. Manon Baletti, however, grieved me sorely by her jealousy and her well founded reproaches. She could not understand—and I did not wonder at it—how I could put off marrying her if I really loved her. She accused me of deceiving her. Her mother died of consumption in our arms. Silvia had won my true friendship. I looked upon her as a most worthy woman, whose kindness of heart and purity of life deserved the esteem of all. I stayed in the family for three days after her death, sincerely sympathising with them in their affliction.

A few days afterwards my friend Tiretta lost his mistress through a grievous illness. Four days before her death, perceiving that she was near her end, she willed to consecrate to God that which man could no longer have, and dismissed her lover with the gift of a valu-

able jewel and a purse of two hundred louis. Tiretta marched off and came and told me the sad news. I got him a lodging near the Temple and a month after, approving his idea to try his fortune in India, I gave him a letter of introduction to M. d'O—, of Amsterdam; and in the course of a week this gentleman got him a post as clerk and shipped him aboard one of the company's ships which was bound for Batavia. If he had behaved well, he might have become a rich man, but he got involved in some conspiracy and had to flee and afterwards experienced many vicissitudes of fortune. I heard from one of his relatives that he was in Bengal in 1788, and in good circumstances but unable to realise on his property and so return to his native country. I do not know what became of him eventually.

In the beginning of November an official belonging to the Duc d'Elbeuf's household came to my establishment to buy a wedding dress for his daughter. I was dazzled with her beauty. She chose a fine satin and her pretty face lighted up when she heard her father say he did not think it was too much, but she looked quite piteous when she heard the clerk tell her father that he would have to buy the whole piece, as they could not cut it. I felt that I would have to give in, and, to avoid making an exception in her favour, I beat a hasty retreat into my private room. I wish I had gone out of the house, as I should have saved a good deal of money, but also what pleasure I should have lost! In her despair the charming girl begged the manager to take her to me and he dared not refuse to do so. She came in, two big tears falling down her cheeks and dimming the ardour of her gaze.

"Oh, sir!" she began, "you are rich; do you buy the piece and let me have enough for a dress, which will make me happy."

I looked at her father and saw he wore an apologetic air, as if depreciating the boldness of his child.

"I like your simplicity," I said to her, "and, since it will make you happy, you shall have the dress."

She ran up to me, threw her arms round my neck and kissed me, while her worthy father was dying with laughter. Her kisses put the last stroke to my bewitchment. After he had paid for the dress, her father said:

"I am going to get this little madcap married next Sunday; there will be a supper and a ball, and we shall be delighted if you will honour us with your presence. My name is Gilbert. I am comptroller of the Duc d'Elbeuf's household."

I promised to be at the wedding and the young lady gave a skip of joy which made me think her prettier than ever.

On Sunday I repaired to the house, but could neither eat nor drink. The fair Mlle. Gilbert kept me in a state of enchantment which lasted while I was in company with her friends, for whom I did not care. They were all officials in noblemen's houses, with their wives and daughters, who all aped the manners of their betters in the most ridiculous way; nobody knew me and I was known to nobody, and I cut a sorry figure amongst them all, for in a company of this sort the witti-

est man is the greatest fool. Everybody cracked his joke to the bride, she answered everybody and people laughed at nothing. Her husband, a thin and melancholy man with a rather foolish expression, was delighted at his wife's keeping everybody amused. Although I was in love with her, I pitied rather than envied him. I guessed that he had married for monetary considerations and I knew pretty well what kind of a headdress his handsome, fiery wife would give her husband, who was plain-featured and seemed not to be aware of his wife's beauty. I was seized with a desire to ask her some questions and she gave me the opportunity by coming to sit next to me after a quadrille. She thanked me again for my kindness and said that the beautiful dress I had supplied had won her many compliments.

"All the same," I said, "I know you are longing to take it off. I know what love is and how impatient it makes one."

"It's very funny that everyone persists in thinking that I am in love, though I saw M. Baret for the first time only a week ago. Before then I was absolutely unconscious of his existence."

"But why are you getting married in such a hurry without waiting till you know him better?"

"Because my father does everything in a hurry."

"I suppose your husband is a very rich man?"

"No, but he may become rich. We are going to open a shop for silk stockings at the corner of the Rue St. Honoré and the Rue des Prouvaires, and I hope you will deal with us, as we would serve you with the best."

"I shall certainly do so—nay, I will be your first customer, if I have to wait at the door."

"You are kind! M. Baret," said she to her husband, who was standing close by, "this gentleman promises to be our first customer."

"The gentleman is very good," said the husband, "and I am sure he will be satisfied, as my stockings are genuine silk."

The next Tuesday at daybreak I began to dance attendance at the corner of the Rue des Prouvaires and waited there till the servant came out to take down the shutters. I went in and the girl asked me my business.

"I want to buy some stockings," was my answer.

"Master and mistress are still in bed, so you had better come later on."

"No, I will wait here. Stop a minute," said I, giving her six francs.

"Go and get me some coffee; I will drink it in the shop."

"I might go and get you some coffee, but I am not so silly as to leave you in the shop by yourself."

"You are afraid I might steal something!"

"Well, one does hear of such things being done and I don't know you from Adam."

"Very good; but I shall stay here all the same."

Before long Baret came down and scolded the poor girl for not having told him of my presence. "Go and tell my wife to come," said

he, as he began opening packets of stockings for me to choose from. He kept stockings, vests and silk drawers and I turned one packet over after another, looking at them all and not fixing on anything till I saw his wife coming down as fresh as a rose and as bright as a lily. She smiled at me in the most seductive manner, apologised for the disorder of her dress and thanked me for keeping my word.

"I never break my word," I said, "especially when such a charming lady is concerned!"

Madame Baret was seventeen, of a moderate height and an exquisite figure; without being classically beautiful, a Raphael could not wish to depict a more enticing face. Her eyes were large and brilliant. Her drooping eyelids, which gave her so modest and yet so voluptuous an appearance, the ever-smiling mouth, her splendid teeth, the dazzling whiteness of her complexion, the pleasing air with which she listened to what was being said, her silvery voice, the sweetness and sparkling vivacity of her manner, her lack of conceit, or rather her unconsciousness of the power of her charms—in fine, everything about this masterpiece of nature made me wonder and admire; while she, by chance or vile monetary considerations, was in the power of Baret, who, pale and sickly, thought a good deal more of his stockings than of the treasure marriage had given him, a treasure of which he was all unworthy, since he could not see its beauty nor taste its sweetness.

I chose stockings and vests to the amount of twenty-five louis and paid the price without trying to cheapen them. I saw the face of the fair shopwoman light up and I augured well for my success, though I could not expect to do much while the honeymoon lasted. I told the servant that I would give her six francs if she would bring the packet to my house, and so I left them.

The next Sunday Baret came himself with my purchases. I gave him six francs to hand over to his servant, but he hinted that he was not too proud to keep them himself. I was disgusted at this petty greed and at his meanness in depriving his maid of the six francs after having a good profit in what he had sold me, but I wanted to stand well with him and was not sorry to find so simple a way of throwing dust in his eyes. So, while I resolved that the servant should not be a loser, I gave the husband a good reception, that I might the better mould him to my purpose. I had breakfast brought to him, asking why he had not brought his wife. "She wanted me to bring her," said he, "but I was afraid you might be offended."

"Not at all, I should have been delighted. I think your wife a charming woman."

"You are very kind to say so, but she's young, she's young."

"I don't think that's any objection; and, if she cares for the walk, bring her with you another time." He said he should be very pleased to do so.

When I passed by the shop in my carriage, I blew kisses to her with my hand but did not stop, as I did not want any more stockings. Indeed, I should have been bored with the crowd of fops with which

the shop was always full. She began to be a topic of conversation in the town; the Palais Royal was full of her, and I was glad to hear that she kept to herself, as if she had richer prey in view. That told me that no one possessed her so far, and I hoped that I might be the prey myself; I was quite willing to be captured.

Some days after she saw my carriage coming and beckoned to me as I passed. I got out and her husband, with many apologies, told me he wanted me to be the first to see a new fashion in breeches he had just got in. The breeches were parti-coloured, and no man of fashion would be seen without them. They were odd-looking things but became a well made young man. As they had to fit exactly, I told him to measure me for six pairs, offering to pay in advance. "We have them in all sizes," said he, "go up to my wife's room and try some on."

It was a good opportunity and I accepted, especially when I heard him tell his wife to go and help me. I went upstairs, she following, and began to undress, apologising for doing so before her.

"I will fancy I am your valet," said she, "and I will help you."

I did not make any objection and, after taking off my shoes, gave her my breeches, taking care, however, to keep on my drawers, lest her modesty should receive too severe a shock. This done, she took a pair of breeches, drew them on me, took them off and tried on others, and all this without any impropriety on either side, for I had determined to behave with discretion till the opportunity came to be indiscreet. She decided that four pairs fitted me admirably and, not wishing to contradict her, I gave her the sixteen louis she asked and told her I should be delighted if she would bring them herself at any time when she was at leisure. She came downstairs quite proud of her knowledge of business, and Baret said that the next Sunday he and his wife would have the honour of bringing me my purchase.

"I shall be charmed, M. Baret," said I, "especially if you will stay to dinner."

He answered that, having an important engagement for two o'clock, he could accept only on the condition that I would let him go at that time, and he would return at about five to fetch his wife. I found the plan vastly to my taste but was able to conceal my joy and said quietly that, though I should lose the pleasure of his society, he was free to go when he liked, especially as I had not to go out myself until six.

I looked forward to the Sunday, and the tradesman and his wife did not fail me. As soon as they arrived, I told my servant to say, "Not at home" for the rest of the day, and, as I was impatient to know what would happen in the afternoon, I had dinner served at an early hour. The dishes were exquisite and the wines delicious. The good man ate much and drank deeply, indeed to such an extent that, in common politeness, I was obliged to remind him that he had an important appointment at two. His wits being sharpened with champagne, the happy thought occurred to him to tell his wife to go home by herself if he were kept later than five, and I hastened to add that I

would take her home myself in my carriage. He thanked me and I soothed his uneasiness about being punctual to his appointment by telling him that a coach was waiting and that the fare had been paid. He went off and I found myself alone with my jewel, whom I was certain of possessing till six o'clock.

As soon as I heard the hall door shut on the kind husband, I said to his wife, "You are to be congratulated on having such a kind husband; with a man like that your happiness is assured."

"It is easy to say happiness, but enjoying it is a different thing. My husband's health is so delicate that I can only consider myself as his nurse; and then he contracted heavy debts to set up in business which oblige us to observe the strictest economy. We came here on foot to save the twenty-four sous. We could live on the profits of the business, if there were no debts, but, as it is, everything goes to pay the interest and our sales are not large enough to cover everything."

"But you have plenty of customers, for, whenever I pass, I see the shop full of people."

"These customers you see are idlers, crackers of bad jokes and profligates, who come and make my head ache with their jests. They have not a penny to bless themselves with, and we dare not let them out of our sight for fear of their hands wandering. If we had cared to give them credit, our shop would have been emptied long ago. I am rude to them, in the hope that they may leave me alone, but it's of no use. Their impudence is astonishing. When my husband is in, I retreat to my room, but he is often away and then I am obliged to put up with them. And the scarcity of money prevents us from doing much business, but we are obliged to pay our workmen all the same. As far as I can see, we shall be obliged to dismiss them, as we shall soon have to meet several bills. Next Saturday we have got to pay six hundred francs, and we have only two hundred."

"I am surprised at your having all this worry in these early days of your marriage. I suppose your father knew about your husband's circumstances; how about your dowry?"

"My dowry of six thousand francs has served, most of it, to stock the shop and pay our debts. We have goods which would pay our debts three times over; but in bad times capital sunk is capital dead."

"I am sorry to hear all this, as, if peace is not made, your situation will become worse, for, as you go on, your needs will become greater."

"Yes, for, when my husband is better, we may have children."

"What! Do you mean to say his health prevents him from making you a mother? I can't believe it."

"I don't see how I can be a mother who am still a maid; not that I care much about the matter."

"I shouldn't have believed it! How can a man not in the agony of death feel ill beside you? He must be dead."

"Well, he is not exactly dead, but he doesn't show many signs of life."

This piece of wit made me laugh and, under cover of my applause,

I embraced her without experiencing much resistance. The first kiss was like an electric spark; it fired my imagination and I increased my attentions till she became as submissive as a lamb.

"I will help you, dearest, to meet the bill on Saturday." And, so saying, I drew her gently into a closet where a soft divan formed a suitable altar for the completion of an amorous sacrifice.

I was enchanted to find her submissive to my caresses and my inquisitiveness, but she surprised me greatly when she moved in such a way as to hinder my advance. I thought at first that it was only one of those devices intended to make the final victory more sweet by putting difficulties in the way; but, finding that her resistance was genuine, I exclaimed, "How was I to expect a refusal like this at a moment when I thought I saw my ardours reflected in your eyes?"

"Your eyes did not deceive you; but what would my husband say if he found me otherwise than as God has made me?"

"You are right, my angel; this fruit must be kept for one unworthy to taste it. I pity and adore you. Come to my arms, abandon yourself to my love and fear nothing."

We passed three hours in trifling together in a manner calculated to inflame our passions. I was consoled by her swearing a thousand times to be mine as soon as Baret had good grounds for thinking that she was his and, after taking her for a drive on the Boulevards, I left her at her door, with a present of twenty-five louis.

I was in love with her as I had never been before and I passed the shop three or four times a day, going round and round, to the wrath of my coachman, who got sick of telling me I was ruining my horses. I was happy to see her watch for the moment that I passed and waft me a kiss by putting her pretty fingers to her mouth.

We had agreed that she should not beckon to me to leave my coach till her husband had performed his task. At last this day, so ardently desired and so long awaited, arrived. The sign was given and I stopped the coach and she came out and, standing on the step, told me to go and wait for her at the church door of St. Germain l'Auxerrois.

I was curious to know what the results would be and had not been at the place appointed more than a quarter of an hour when she came towards me, her head muffled in a hood. She got into the carriage and, saying that she wanted to make some purchases, begged me to take her to the shops.

I had business of my own, and pressing business too, but who can refuse the Beloved Object anything? I told the coachman to drive to the Place Dauphine, and I was prepared to loosen my purse-strings, as I had a feeling she was going to take full advantage of the opportunity. In point of fact, she left few shops unvisited, going from jewels to pretty trifles and toys of different kinds, and from these to dresses of the latest fashion, which they displayed before her, addressing her as "princess" and saying that this would become her admirably. She looked at me and said it must be confessed that it was very pretty and that she would like it if it were not so dear. I was a willing dupe

and assured her that, if she liked it, it could not be too dear and that I would pay.

While my sweetheart was thus choosing one trifle after another, my ill-luck brought about an incident which placed me in a fearful situation four years afterwards. The chain of events is endless.

I perceived at my left a pretty girl of twelve or thirteen, with an old and ugly woman who was disparaging a pair of earrings which the girl had in her hands and on which she had evidently set her heart; she looked sad at not being able to buy them. I heard her say to the old woman that they would make her happy, but she snatched them from the girl's hands and told her to come away.

"I can let you have a cheaper pair and almost as fine," said the shopwoman, but the young lady said she did not care about it and was getting ready to go, making a profound reverence to my "Princess Baret."

She, no doubt flattered by this sign of respect, went up to her, called her "little queen," told her she was as fair as a May morning and asked the old woman her name.

"She is Mlle. de Boulainvillier, my niece."

"How can you be so hard-hearted," said I to the aunt, "as to refuse your charming niece a toy which would make her happy? Allow me to make her a present of them."

So saying, I put the earrings in the girl's hands, while she blushed and looked at her aunt as if to ask her permission.

"You may have the earrings," said she, "as this gentleman has been kind enough to give you such a present, and you should give him a kiss by way of thanks."

"The earrings," said the shopwoman, "will be only three louis."

Hereupon the affair took a comic turn; the old woman got into a rage and said:

"How can you be such a cheat? You told me they were only two louis."

"Nay, madame, I asked three."

"That's a lie, and I shall not allow you to rob this gentleman. Niece, put those earrings down; let the shopwoman keep them."

So far all was well enough, but the old aunt spoiled everything by saying that, if I liked to give her niece the three louis, she could get her a pair twice as good at another shop. It was all the same to me, so I smilingly put the three louis in front of the young lady, who still had the earrings in her hands. The shopwoman, who was on the lookout, pocketed the money, saying that the bargain was made, that the three louis belonged to her and the earrings to the young lady.

"You are a cheat," cried out the enraged old woman.

"And you are an old b—d," answered the shopwoman. "I know you well." A crowd began to gather in front of the shop, hearing the cries of the two harpies. Foreseeing a good deal of unpleasantness, I took the aunt by the arm and led her gently away. The niece, who was quite content with the earrings and did not care whether they cost three

louis or two, followed her. We shall hear of them again in due course.

My dear Baret having me waste a score of louis, which her poor husband would have regretted much more than I, we got into the carriage again and I took her to the church door from which we had started. On the way she told me she was coming to stop a few days with me at Little Poland and that it was her husband who would ask me for the invitation.

"When will he do that?"

"To-morrow, if you go by the shop. Come and buy some stockings; I shall have a bad headache and Baret will speak to you."

It may be imagined that I took care to call the next day, and, as I did not see his wife in the shop, I asked in a friendly way after her health.

"She is ill in bed," he replied: "She needs a little country air."

"If you have not fixed on any place, I shall be happy to put you up at Little Poland."

He replied by a smile of delight.

"I will go and urge her to come myself; in the meanwhile, M. Baret, will you pack me up a dozen pairs of stockings?"

I went upstairs and found the invalid in bed and laughing in spite of her imaginary headache. "The business is done," said I, "you will soon hear of it. As I had said, the husband came upstairs with my stockings and told her that I had been good enough to give her a room in my house. The crafty little creature thanked me, assuring her husband that the fresh air would soon cure her.

"You shall be well looked after," said I, "but you must excuse me if I do not keep you company—I have to attend to my business. M. Baret will be able to come and sleep with you every night and start early enough in the morning to be in time for the opening of his shop."

After many compliments had been interchanged, Baret decided on having his sister stay in the house while his wife was away, and, as I took leave, I said that I should give orders for their reception that very evening, in case I was out when they came.

Next day I stayed out till after midnight and the cook told me that the wedded couple had made a good supper and had gone to bed: I warned her that I should be dining at home every day and that I would not see any company.

The following day I was up betimes and, on inquiring if the husband had risen, I learnt that he had got up at daybreak and would not be back till supper-time. The wife was still asleep. I thought with reason she was not asleep for me, and I went to pay her my first visit. In point of fact, she was awake, and I took a foretaste of greater joys by a thousand kisses, which she returned with interest. We jested at the expense of the worthy man who had trusted me with a jewel of which I was about to make such good use, and we congratulated each other on the prospects of a week's mutual pleasures.

"Come, my dear," said I, "get up and put on a few clothes and we will take breakfast in my room."

She did not make an elaborate toilette; a cotton dressing-gown, a pretty lace cap, a lawn kerchief, that was all, but how the simple dress was lighted by the roses of her cheeks! We were quick over our breakfast, we were in a hurry, and, when we had done, I shut the door and we gave ourselves over to the enjoyment of our bliss.

Surprised to find her in the same condition in which I had left her, I told her I had hoped . . . but she, without giving me time to finish the phrase, said:

"My jewel, Baret thinks, or pretends to think, that he has done his duty as a husband; but he is no hand at the business, and I am disposed to put myself in your hands, and then there will be no doubt of my condition."

"We shall thus, my sweet, be doing him a service, and the service shall be well done."

We swore a thousand times to love each other and to remain constant, and we may possibly have been sincere, as we were in our ecstasy of pleasure. We separated only to dress; then, after taking a turn in the garden, we dined together, sure that in a sumptuous repast, washed down by the choicest wines, we should find strength to reanimate our desires and to lull them to sleep in bliss.

At dessert, as I was pouring champagne into her glass, I asked her how with such a fiery temperament she had managed to preserve her virtue.

"Cupid," said I, "might have gathered the fruit that Hymen could not taste. You are seventeen and the pear has been ripe for two years at least."

"Very true, but I have never had a lover."

"Never?"

"I have been courted, but to no effect. My heart was ever silent. Possibly my father thought otherwise when I begged him, a month ago, to get me married soon."

"Very likely, but, as you were not in love, why were you in such a hurry?"

"I knew that the Duc d'Elbeuf would soon be coming to town, and, if he found me still single, he would oblige me to become the wife of a man I detest, who would have me at any price."

"Who is this man for whom you have such an aversion?"

"He is one of the duke's pets, a monster who sleeps with his master."

"Really! I did not know the duke had such tastes."

"Oh, yes; he is eighty-four and thinks himself a woman; he says he must have a husband."

"That is very funny. And is this aspirant to your hand a handsome man?"

"I think him horrible; but everybody else thinks he is a fine man."

The charming Baret spent a week with me. I have seen few women as pretty and seductive and none whose skin was more exquisitely soft and fair. Her breath was aromatic and this made her kisses most

sweet. Her neck was exquisitely shaped, and the two globes, tipped with coral, were as hard as marble. The exquisite curves of her figure would have defied the skill of the ablest painter. I experienced an ineffable joy in contemplating her and, in the midst of my happiness, I called myself unhappy because I could not satisfy all the desires which her charms aroused in me. I do not think a more expert mistress in the art of love could be found.

Each of us looked forward to the day of her departure with equal grief, and our only consolation lay in the hope of meeting again and often. Three days after she went away, I went to see her, more in love than ever, and gave her two notes of five thousand francs apiece. Her husband may have had his suspicions, but he was too happy at being enabled to pay his debts and to keep his shop open to say anything unpleasant. Many husbands would think themselves lucky to have such productive wives!

In the beginning of November I sold shares for fifty thousand francs to a man named Garnier, living in the Rue du Mail, giving up to him a third part of the materials in my warehouse and accepting a manager chosen by him and paid by the company. Three days after signing the deed, I received the money, but in the night the doctor, my warehouseman, emptied the till and absconded. I have always thought that this robbery could not have been effected without the connivance of the painter. This loss was a serious blow to me, as my affairs were getting into an embroiled condition; and, for a finishing touch to my misfortunes, Garnier had me served with a summons to repay him the fifty thousand francs. My answer was that I was not liable, that his manager had been appointed, the agreement and sale of the shares was valid and that he, being one of the company, would have to share in the loss. As he persisted in his claim, I was advised to go to law, but Garnier declared the agreement null and void, accusing me in an indirect manner of having appropriated the money which I had said had been stolen. I would willingly have given him a good thrashing, but he was an old man and that course would not have mended matters, so I kept my temper. The merchant who had given surety for the doctor was not to be found; he had become bankrupt. Garnier had all my stock seized and sequestered my horses, carriages and all my private property. While these troubles were harassing me, I dismissed all my work-girls, who had always been a great expense, and replaced them with workmen and some of my servants. The painter still retained his position, which was an assured one, as he always paid himself out of the sales.

My attorney was an honest man—a rare bird amongst lawyers—but my barrister, who kept telling me that the case would soon be decided, was a rascal. While the decision was pending, Garnier served me with a writ to pay the sum claimed. I took it to my counsel, who promised to appeal the same day, which he did not do, while he appropriated to his own use the money assigned by me for the costs of an action which, if there had been justice in France, I should certainly

have won. Two other summonses were issued against me and, before I knew what was going on, a warrant was issued for my arrest. I was seized at eight o'clock in the morning, as I was driving along the Rue St. Denis. The sergeant of police sat beside me, a second got up beside the coachman and a third stationed himself at the back of the coach, and in this state we drove to Fort l'Evêque.

As soon as the police had handed me over to the gaoler, he informed me that, by payment of the fifty thousand francs or by giving good bail, I might instantly regain my freedom.

"For the moment," said I, "I can command neither money nor bail."

"Very good, then you will stay in prison."

The gaoler took me to a decent-looking room and I told him I had been served with only one writ.

"Very likely," answered he, "it often happens like that; but it is rather difficult to prove."

"Bring me writing materials and have a trusty messenger at my disposal."

I wrote to my counsel, to my attorney, to Madame d'Urfé and to all my friends, including my brother, who had just married. The attorney called immediately, but the barrister contented himself with writing to the effect that, as he had put in an appeal, my seizure was illegal and damages might be recovered. He ended by begging me to give him a free hand and to have patience for a few days.

Manon Baletti sent her brother with her diamond earrings. Madame du Romain dispatched her barrister—a man of rare honesty—to me and wrote a friendly note, in which she said that, if I wanted five hundred louis, I should have them on the morrow. My brother neither wrote nor came to see me. As to dear Madame d'Urfé, she sent to say that she would expect me at dinner. I thought she had gone mad, as I could not think she was making fun of me.

At eleven o'clock my room was full of people. Poor Baret had come, weeping and offering me all his shop held. I was touched by the worthy man's kindness. At last I was told that a lady in a coach wanted to see me. I waited but nobody came. In my impatience I called the turnkey, who told me that, after questioning the clerk of the prison, she had gone away again. From the description I was given I had no difficulty in identifying the lady as Madame d'Urfé.

To find myself deprived of my liberty was a disagreeable shock to me. I thought of The Leads and, though my present situation was not to be compared with that, I cursed my fate, as I foresaw that my imprisonment would damage my reputation. I had thirty thousand francs in hard cash and jewels to more than double that amount, but I could not decide on making such a sacrifice, in spite of the advice given by Madame du Romain's barrister, who would have me got out of prison at any cost.

"All you have to do," said the barrister, "is to deposit half the sum demanded, which I will give to the clerk of the court, and in a short

time I can promise a decision in your favour and the restoration of your money."

We were discussing the matter when the gaoler entered and said, very politely, "Sir, you are a free man again and a lady is waiting for you at the door in her carriage."

I called Le Duc, my man, and told him to go and see who the lady was. He returned with the information that it was Madame d'Urfé. I made my bow to everybody and after four very disagreeable hours of imprisonment found myself free again and sitting in a splendid coach.

Madame d'Urfé received me with dignified kindness and a judge who was in the carriage apologised for his country, where strangers were exposed to such insults. I thanked Madame d'Urfé in a few words, telling her I was glad to become her debtor, but that it was Garnier who was benefiting by her generosity. She replied, with a pleasant smile, that she was not so sure of that and that we would talk it over at dinner. She wanted me to go and walk in the Tuileries and the Palais Royal, to convince people that the report of my imprisonment had been false. I thought the advice excellent and, as I set out, I promised to be with her at two o'clock.

After showing myself on the two principal promenades of Paris, amusing myself by the astonishment depicted on certain faces well known to me, I went and returned the earrings to my dear Manon, who gave an astonished but happy cry when she saw me. I thanked her tenderly for the proof she had given me of her attachment and said that I had been arrested by a plot for which I would make the plotters pay dear. After promising to spend the evening with them, I went to Madame d'Urfé's.

This good lady, whose foible is well known to my readers, made me laugh when she said that her genius had told her that I had got myself arrested to be talked about, for reasons which were known only to myself.

"As soon as I was informed of your arrest," said she, "I went to the Fort l'Evêque and, on learning from the clerk what the affair was about, I deposited bonds to bail you out. If you are not in a position to have justice done you, Garnier will have to reckon with me before he takes the money I have deposited. But your first step should be to commence a criminal prosecution against your barrister, who not only failed to put in your appeal but has robbed and deceived you."

I left her in the evening, assuring her that in a few days her bail should be returned to her, and went to the French and Italian plays in succession, taking care to render myself conspicuous, that my reappearance might be complete. Afterwards I went to sup with Manon Baletti, who was too happy to have had an opportunity of showing her affection for me; and her joy was full when I told her that I was going to give up business, for she thought that my seraglio was the only obstacle to my marriage with her.

The next day was passed with Madame du Romain. I felt that my

obligations to her were great, while she, in the goodness of her heart, was persuaded that she could make no adequate return to me for the oracles with which I furnished her and by following which she was safely guided through the perplexities of life. I cannot understand how she, whose wit was keen and whose judgment on other subjects was of the soundest, could be liable to such folly. I was sorry when I reflected that to this deceit of mine the kindness she had shown me was chiefly due.

My imprisonment disgusted me with Paris and made me conceive a hatred of the law which I still feel. I found myself entangled in a double maze of knavery—Garnier was my foe, and so was my own barrister. Every time I went to plead, to spend my money amongst lawyers and waste the time better given to pleasure, I felt as if I were going to execution. In this perturbed kind of life, so contrary to my inclinations, I resolved to set to work in earnest to make my fortune, so that I might become independent and free to enjoy life according to my tastes. I decided in the first place that I would cut myself free of all that bound me to Paris, make a second journey into Holland to replenish my purse and invest my money in a yearly income for two lives and from thenceforth live free from care. The two lives were those of my wife and myself; my wife would be Manon Baletti, and, when I told her my plans, she would have thought them delightful if I had begun by marrying her.

The first thing I did was to give up Little Poland. I then drew out the twenty-four thousand francs which were my surety for keeping a lottery office in the Rue St. Denis. Thus I got rid of my ridiculous office of lottery receiver and, after getting my clerk married, I handed over the office to him—in short, I made his fortune. A friend of his wife's was his surety; such things often happen.

I did not like to leave Madame d'Urfé involved in a troublesome suit with Garnier, so I went to Versailles to see the Abbé de la Ville, a great friend of his, and begged him to induce Garnier to make a compromise.

The abbé saw that his friend was in the wrong and so was all the more willing to help me; and a few days afterwards he wrote me to go and see Garnier, assuring me that I should find him inclined to arrange matters in a friendly manner.

Garnier was at Rueil, where he had a house which cost him four hundred thousand francs, a fine estate for a man who had made his money as an army contractor during the last war. He was rich, but he was so unfortunate as to be still fond of women at the age of seventy, while his impotence debarred him from the proper enjoyment of their society. I found him in company with three young ladies, all of them pretty and, as I heard afterwards, of good families; but they were poor and their necessities forced them to submit to a disgusting intercourse with the old profligate. I stayed to dinner and admired the propriety and modesty of their behaviour, in spite of the humiliation which accompanies poverty. After dinner Garnier went to sleep and

left me to entertain these girls, whom I would willingly have rescued from their unfortunate situation if I had been able. After Garnier woke, we went into his study to talk over our business.

At first he maintained his claim tenaciously and seemed unwilling to yield an inch; but, when I told him that I was leaving Paris in a few days, he saw that, as he could not detain me, Madame d'Urfé might take the suit over and carry it on to infinity and he might lose it at last. That made him think it over and he asked me to stay in his house for the night. The next day after breakfast he said:

"I have made up my mind. I will take twenty-five thousand francs, or keep the matter before the courts till my dying day."

I answered that he would find the sum in the hands of Madame d'Urfé's solicitor and that he could receive it as soon as he had given relevy on the bail at the Fort l'Evêque.

I could not persuade Madame d'Urfé that I had acted wisely in coming to an arrangement till I had told her that my genius had commanded me not to leave Paris until my affairs were settled, so that no one might be able to accuse me of having gone away to avoid creditors whose claims I could not satisfy.

Three or four days afterwards I went to take leave of M. de Choiseul, who promised to instruct M. d'Afri to aid me in negotiating a loan at five per cent with either the States-General or a private company.

"You can tell everyone," said he, "that peace is certain to be made in the course of the winter, and I will take care that you shall have what is due you on your return to France."

M. de Choiseul deceived me, for he knew very well that peace would not be made; but I had no definite project, and I repented of having given M. de Boulogne my confidence and also of having done anything for the Government the reward of which was not immediate and certain.

I sold my horses, my carriages, my furniture; I went bail for my brother, who had contracted debts he was sure of paying, as he had several pictures on the easel which he had been ordered to paint by some of his rich and noble patrons. I took leave of Manon, whom I left in floods of tears, though I swore with the utmost sincerity to come back soon and marry her.

At last all my preparations were finished and I left Paris with a hundred thousand francs in bills of exchange and jewels to the same amount. I was alone in my post-chaise, Le Duc preceding me on horseback, which the rascal preferred to being shut up in a carriage.

This Le Duc of mine was a Spaniard, aged eighteen, a sharp fellow whom I valued highly, especially because he did my hair better than anyone else. I never refused him a pleasure which a little money would buy. Besides him I had a good Swiss servant, who served as my courier.

It was the first of December, 1759, and the air was frosty, but I was fortified against the inclemency of the season. I was able to read

comfortably, and I took Helvetius's *Esprit*, which I had never had time to read before. After perusing it, I was equally astonished at the sensation it had created and at the stupidity of the High Court which had condemned it. Of course that exalted body was largely influenced by the King and the clergy, and among them all no effort was spared to ruin Helvetius, a good-hearted man with more wit than his book. I saw nothing novel either in the historical part relating to the morals of nations (in which Helvetius dismisses us as triflers) or in the position that morality is dependent on reason. All that he says has been said over and over again, and Blaise Pascal went much farther, but he wrote more skilfully and better in every way than Helvetius, who, wishing to remain in France, was obliged to retract. He preferred a quiet life to his honour and his philosophy. His wife had a nobler soul than he, as she wanted to sell all they had and take refuge in Holland, rather than submit to the shame of a recantation. Perhaps Helvetius would have followed the noble advice of his wife if he had foreseen that this monstrous recantation would make his book into a fraud, for he had to confess that he had written without due reflection, that he was more in jest than in earnest and that his arguments were mere sophisms. But many men of keen intellects had not waited for him to recant before exposing this wretched system of his. And, admitting that whatever man does is done for his own interest, does it follow that gratitude is a folly and that virtue and vice are identical? Are a villain and a man of honour to be weighed in the same balance? If such a dreadful system were not absurd, virtue would be mere hypocrisy; and, if by any possibility it were true, it ought to be proscribed by general consent, since it would lead to general ruin and corruption.

It might have been proved to Helvetius that the propositions that the first motive is always self-interest and that we should always consult our own interest first are fallacious. It is a strange thing that so virtuous a man would not admit the existence of virtue. It is an amusing suggestion that he published his book only out of modesty, but that would have contradicted his own system. But, if it were so, was it well done to render himself contemptible to escape the imputation of pride? Modesty is a virtue only when it is natural; if it is put on or is merely the result of training, it is detestable. The great d'Alembert was the most truly modest man I have ever seen.

When I got to Brussels, where I spent two days, I went to the Hôtel de l'Impératrice and chance sent Mlle. X— C— V— and Farsetti across my path, but I pretended not to see them. From Brussels I went straight to The Hague and put up at the Prince of Orange. On my asking the host who sat down at his table, he told me that his company consisted of general officers of the Hanoverian army, some English ladies and a Prince Piccolomini and his wife; and this made me make up my mind to join this illustrious assemblage.

I was unknown to all and, keeping my eyes about me, I gave my chief attention to the observation of the supposed Italian princess,

who was pretty enough, and more especially of her husband, whom I seemed to recognise. In the course of conversation I heard some talk of the celebrated St. Germain and it seemed that he was stopping in the same hotel.

I had returned to my room and was thinking of going to bed when Prince Piccolomini entered and embraced me as an old friend.

"A look in your face," said he, "tells me that the recognition has been mutual. I knew you directly, in spite of the sixteen years that have passed since we saw each other at Vicenza. To-morrow you can tell everybody that we are friends and that, though I am not a prince, I am really a count; here is my passport from the King of Naples; pray read it."

During this rapid monologue I could not get in a single word and, on attentively scanning his features, I could only recollect that I had seen him before, but when or where or how I knew not. I opened the passport and read the name of Ruggero di Rocco, Count Piccolomini. That was enough. I remembered an individual of that name who was a fencing-master in Vicenza, and, on looking at him again, his aspect, though much changed, left no doubt as to the identity of the swordsman and the count.

"I congratulate you," said I, "on your change of employment; your new business is doubtless much better than the old."

"I taught fencing," he replied, "to save myself from dying of hunger, for my father was so hard a man that he would not give me the wherewithal to live, and I disguised my name so as not to disgrace it. On my father's death I succeeded to the property, and in Rome I married the lady you have seen."

"You had good taste, for she's a pretty woman."

"She is generally thought so, and it was a love match on my side."

He ended by asking me to come and see him in his room the next day after dinner, telling me that I should find good company and a bank at faro, which he kept himself. He added without ceremony that, if I liked it, we could go half shares and that I should find it profitable. I thanked him and promised to pay him a visit.

I went abroad at an early hour the next morning and, after having spent some time with the Jew Boaz and having given a polite refusal to his offer of a bed, I went to pay my respects to M. d'Afri, who since the death of the Princess of Orange, Regent of the Low Countries, was generally known as His Most Christian Majesty's ambassador. He gave me an excellent reception but said that, if I had returned to Holland hoping to do business on behalf of the Government, I would waste my time, since the action of the comptroller-general had lowered the credit of the nation, which was thought to be on the verge of bankruptcy.

"This M. de Silhouette," said he, "has served the King very badly. It is all very well to say that payments are suspended only for a year, but it is not believed."

He then asked me if I knew a certain Comte de St. Germain, who had lately arrived at The Hague.

"He has not called on me," said the ambassador, "though he says he is commissioned by the King to negotiate a loan of a hundred millions. When I am asked about him, I am obliged to say that I know nothing about him, for fear of compromising myself. Such a reply, as you can understand, is not likely to increase his chance of success, but that is his fault and not mine. Why has he not brought me a letter from the Duc de Choiseul or the Marquise de Pompadour? I take him to be an impostor, but I shall know something more about him in the course of ten days."

I told him, in my turn, all I knew of this truly eccentric individual. He was not a little surprised to hear that the King had given him an apartment at Chambord, but, when I told him that the count professed to be able to make diamonds, he laughed and said that in that case he would no doubt make the hundred millions. Just as I was leaving, M. d'Afri asked me to dine with him on the following day.

On returning to the hotel I called on the Comte de St. Germain.

"You have anticipated me," said he, on seeing me enter. "I intended to call on you. I suppose, my dear Casanova, that you have come to try what you can do for our Court, but you will find your task a difficult one, as the Exchange is highly offended at the late doings of that fool Silhouette. All the same, I hope I shall be able to get my hundred millions. I have given my word to my friend, Louis XV (I may call him so) and I can't disappoint him; the business will be done in the next three or four weeks."

"I should think M. d'Afri might assist you."

"I do not require his assistance. Probably I shall not even call upon him, as he might say he had helped me. No, I shall have all the trouble and I mean to have all the glory, too."

"I presume you will be going to Court, where the Duke of Brunswick may be of service to you?"

"Why should I go to Court? As for the Duke of Brunswick, I do not care to know him. All I have to do is to go to Amsterdam, where my credit is sufficiently good for anything. I am fond of the King of France; there's not a better man in the kingdom."

"Well, come and dine at the high table; the company is of the best and will please you."

"You know I never eat; moreover, I never sit down at a table where I may meet persons who are unknown to me."

"Then, my lord, farewell; we shall see each other again in Amsterdam."

I went down to the dining-room, where, while dinner was being served, I conversed with some officers. They asked me if I knew Prince Piccolomini, to which I answered that he was not a prince but a count and that it was many years since I had seen him.

When the count and his fair wife (who spoke only Italian) came

down, I showed them some polite attentions and we then sat down to dinner.

CHAPTER 65

THE so-called Countess Piccolomini was a fine example of the adventuress. She was young, tall, well built, had eyes full of fire and skin of a dazzling whiteness—not, however, that natural whiteness which delights those who know the value of a satin skin and rose petals, but rather that artificial fairness which is commonly to be seen in Rome on the faces of courtesans and which disgusts those who know how it is produced. She had also splendid teeth, glorious hair as black as jet and arched, ebony-like eyebrows. To these advantages she added attractive manners and there was something intelligent about the way she spoke; but through all I saw the adventuress peeping out, which made me detest her.

As she did not speak anything but Italian, the countess had to play the part of a mute at table, except where an English officer named Walpole was concerned, who, finding her to his taste, set himself to amuse her. I felt friendly disposed towards this Englishman, though my feelings were certainly not the result of sympathy. If I had been blind or deaf, Sir James Walpole would have been totally indifferent to me, as what I felt for him was the result of my observation.

Although I did not care for the countess, for all that, I went up to her room after dinner with the greater part of the guests. The count arranged a game of whist and Walpole played at primero with the countess, who cheated him in a masterly manner; but, though he saw it, he laughed and paid because it suited his purpose to do so. When he had lost fifty louis, he called quarter and the countess asked him to take her to the theatre. This was what the good-natured Englishman wanted, and he and the countess went off, leaving the husband playing whist.

I, too, went to the play and, as chance would have it, my neighbour in the pit was Count Tot, brother to the count famous for his stay in Constantinople.

We had some conversation together and he told me he had been obliged to leave France on account of a duel which he had had with a man who had jested with him for not being present at the battle of Minden, saying that he had absented himself in view of the battle. The count had proved his courage with the sword on the other's body, a rough kind of argument which was fashionable then as now. He told me he had no money and I immediately put my purse at his service; but, as the saying goes, a kindness is never thrown away and five years later he did the same by me in St. Petersburg. Between the acts he happened to notice the Countess Piccolomini and asked me if I knew her husband.

"I know him very slightly," I answered, "but we happen to be staying at the same hotel."

"He's a regular black sheep," said the count, "and his wife's no better than he."

It seemed that they had already won a reputation in the town.

After the play I went back to the hotel by myself and the head-waiter told me that Piccolomini had set out hotfoot with his servant, his only luggage being a light portmanteau. He did not know the reason of this sudden departure, but a minute afterwards the countess came in and, her maid having whispered something to her, she told me that the count had left because he had fought a duel, but that that often happened. She asked me to sup with her and Walpole, and her appetite did not seem to suffer from the absence of her spouse.

Just as we were finishing supper, an Englishman who had been of the whist party came up and told Walpole that the Italian had been caught cheating and had given the lie to their fellow Englishman, who had detected him and they had gone out together. An hour afterwards the Englishman returned with two wounds, one on the forearm and one on the shoulder. It was a trifling affair altogether.

Next day, after I had had dinner with the Comte d'Afri, I found a letter from Piccolomini, with an enclosure addressed to the countess, waiting for me at the inn. He begged me to give his wife the letter, which would inform her of his plans, and then to bring her to the Ville de Lyon in Amsterdam, where he was staying. He wanted to know how the Englishman whom he had wounded was getting on.

The duty struck me as an amusing one and I should have laughed with all my heart if I had felt the least desire to profit by the confidence he was pleased to place in me. Nevertheless I went up to the countess, whom I found sitting up in bed playing with Walpole. She read the letter, told me she could not start till the day following and informed me what time she would go, as if it had been all settled; but I smiled sardonically and told her that my business kept me at The Hague and I could not possibly escort her. When Walpole heard me say this, he offered to be my substitute, to which she agreed. They set out the day following, intending to lie at Leyden.

Two days after their departure, I was sitting down to dinner with the usual company, increased by two Frenchmen who had just come. After the soup one of them said, coolly, "The famous Casanova is now in Holland."

"Is he?" said the other. "I shall be glad to see him and ask for an explanation which he will not like."

I looked at the man and, feeling certain that I had never seen him before, I began to get enraged; but I merely asked the fellow if he knew Casanova.

"I ought to know him," said he, in that self-satisfied tone which is always so unpleasant.

"Nay, sir, you are mistaken; I am Casanova."

Without losing his self-possession, he replied, insolently, "You are really very much mistaken if you think you are the only Casanova in the world."

It was a sharp answer and put me in the wrong. I bit my lips and held my tongue, but was grievously offended and determined to make him find me to be the Casanova who was in Holland and from whom he was going to extract an unpleasant explanation. In the meanwhile I bore as well as I could the poor figure I must be cutting before the officers at table, who, after hearing the insolence of this young blockhead, might take me for a coward. He, the insolent fellow, had no scruple in abusing the triumph his answer had given him, and talked away in the most random fashion. At last he forgot himself so far as to ask from what country I came.

"I am a Venetian, sir," I replied.

"Ah! then you are a good friend to France, as your republic is under French protection."

At these words my ill-temper boiled over and, in the tone of voice one uses to put down a puppy, I replied that the Republic of Venice was strong enough to do without the protection of France or of any other power and that during the thirteen centuries of its existence it had had many friends and allies but no protectors. "Perhaps," I ended, "you will seek to cover your ignorance by replying that there is more than one Venice in the world."

I had no sooner said this than a burst of laughter from the whole table set me right again. The young blockhead seemed taken aback and in his turn bit his lips, but his evil genius made him strike in again at dessert. As usual the conversation went from one subject to another and we began to talk about the Duke of Albemarle. The Englishmen spoke in his favour and said that, if he had been alive, there would have been no war between England and France; they were probably right, but, even if the duke had lived, war might have broken out, as the two nations in question have never yet succeeded in understanding that it is to the interest of both to live at peace together. Another Englishman praised Lolotte, his mistress. I said I had seen that charming woman at the Duchess of Fulvi's and that no one deserved better to become the Countess of Eronville. The Count of Eronville, a lieutenant-general and a man of letters, had just married her.

I had scarcely finished what I had to say when Master Blockhead said, with a laugh, that he knew Lolotte to be a good sort of girl, as he had slept with her in Paris. I could restrain myself no longer; my indignation and rage consumed me. I took up my plate and made as if I would throw it at his head, saying at the same time, "You infernal liar!" He got up and stood with his back to the fire, but I could see by his sword-knot that he was a soldier.

Everybody pretended not to hear anything of this and the conversation went on for some time on different subjects, and at last they all rose from their seats and left the room.

My enemy said to his companion that they would see one another again after the play, and remained by the fire, with his elbow resting on the chimney piece. I remained at table till the company had all left

the room and, when we were alone together, I got up and looked him straight in the face and went out, walking towards Scheveningen, sure that he would follow me if he was a man of any mettle. When I had got to some distance from the hotel, I looked round and saw that he was following me at a distance of fifty paces.

When I got to the wood, I stopped at a suitable place and stood awaiting my antagonist. He was ten paces off when he drew his sword, and I had plenty of time to draw mine, though he came on fast. The fight did not last long, for, as soon as he was near enough, I gave him a thrust which has never failed me, and sent him back quicker than he came. He was wounded in the chest above the right breast, but, as my sword was flat and the opening rather large, the wound bled easily. I lowered my sword and ran up to him, but I could do nothing; he said that we should meet again in Amsterdam if I was going there, and that he would have his revenge. I saw him again five or six years afterwards in Warsaw and then I did him a kindness. I heard afterwards that his name was Varnier, but I do not know whether he was identical with the president of the National Convention under the infamous Robespierre.

I did not return to the hotel till after the play and I then heard that the Frenchman, after having the surgeon with him for an hour, had set out for Rotterdam with his friend. We had a pleasant supper and talked cheerfully together without a word being said about the duel, with the exception that an English lady said, I forget in what connection, that a man of honour should never risk sitting down to dinner at an hotel unless he felt inclined, if necessary, to fight. The remark was very true at the time, when one had to draw the sword for an idle word and expose oneself to the consequences of a duel or else be pointed at, even by the ladies, with the finger of scorn.

I had nothing more to keep me at The Hague and I set out next morning before daybreak for Amsterdam. On the way I stopped for dinner and recognised Sir James Walpole, who told me that he had started from Amsterdam the evening before, an hour after giving the countess into her husband's charge. He said that he had got very tired of her, as he had nothing more to get from a woman who gave more than one asked if one's purse-strings were opened wide enough. I got to Amsterdam about midnight and took up my abode at The Old Bible. The neighbourhood of Esther had awakened my love for that charming girl and I was so impatient to see her that I could not sleep.

I went out about ten o'clock and called on M. d'O—, who welcomed me in the friendliest manner and reproached me for not having alighted at his house. When he heard that I had given up business, he congratulated me on not having removed it into Holland, as I should have been ruined. I did not tell him that I had nearly come to that in France, as I considered such a piece of information would not assist my designs. He complained bitterly of the bad faith of the French government, which had involved him in considerable losses; and then he asked me to come and see Esther.

I was too impatient to embrace her to wait to be asked twice; I ran to greet her. As soon as she saw me, she gave a cry of surprise and delight and threw herself into my arms, where I received her with fondness equal to her own. I found her grown and improved; she looked lovely. We had scarcely sat down when she told me that she had become as skilled in the cabala as myself.

"It makes my life happy," said she, "for it gives me a power over my father and assures me that he will never marry me to anyone but the man of my choice."

"I am delighted that you extract the only good that can proceed from this idle science, namely, the power to guide persons devoid of strength and will. But your father must think that I taught you the secret?"

"Yes, he does; and he said one day that he would forgive me any sacrifices I might have made to obtain this precious secret from you."

"He goes a little farther than we did, my dearest Esther."

"Yes, and I told him that I had gained it from you without any sacrifice and that now I was a true Pythoness without having to endure the torments of the tripod; and I am sure that the replies you gave were invented by yourself."

"But, if that were so, how could I have known where the pocket-book was or whether the ship was safe?"

"You saw the portfolio yourself and threw it where it was discovered and, as for the vessel, you spoke at random; but, as you are an honest man, confess that you were afraid of the results. I am never so bold as that and, when my father asks me questions of that kind, my replies are more obscure than a sibyl's. I don't wish him to lose confidence in my oracle, nor do I wish him to be able to reproach me with a loss that would injure my own interests."

"If your error makes you happy, I shall leave you in it. You are really a woman of extraordinary talents; you are quite unique."

"I don't want your compliments," said she, in a rather vexed manner. "I want a sincere avowal of the truth."

"I don't think I can go as far as that."

At these words, which I pronounced in a serious way, Esther went into a reverie, but I was not going to lose the superiority I had over her, and I racked my brains to find some convincing prediction the oracle might make to her and, while I was doing so, dinner was announced.

There were four of us at table, and I concluded that the fourth of the party must be in love with Esther, as he kept his eyes on her the whole time. He was her father's favourite clerk and no doubt her father would have been glad if she had fallen in love with him, but I soon saw that she was not likely to do so. Esther was silent all through dinner and we did not mention the cabala till the clerk was gone.

"Is it possible," said M. d'O—, "for my daughter to obtain the answers of the oracle without your having taught her?"

"I always thought such a thing impossible till to-day," I answered, "but Esther has convinced me that I was mistaken. I can teach the secret to no one without losing it myself, for the oath I swore to the sage who taught me forbids me to impart it to another, under pain of forfeiture. But, as your daughter has taken no such oath, having acquired it herself, she may be, for all I know, at perfect liberty to communicate the secret to anyone."

Esther, who was as keen as a razor, took care to say that the same oath that I had taken had been imposed on her by the oracle and that she could not communicate the cabalistic secret to anyone without the permission of her genius, under pain of losing it herself.

I read her inmost thoughts and was rejoiced to see that her mind was calmed. She had reason to be grateful to me, whether I had lied or not, for I had given her a power over her father which a father's kindness could not have assured; but she perceived that what I had said about her oracular abilities had been dictated merely by politeness, and she waited till we were alone to make me confess as much.

Her worthy father, who believed entirely in the infallibility of our oracles, had the curiosity to put the same question to both of us, to see if we should agree in the answer. Esther was delighted with the idea, as she suspected that one answer would flatly contradict the other; and M. d'O—, having written his question on two sheets of paper, gave them to us. Esther went up to her room for the operation and I questioned the oracle on the table at which we had had dinner, in the presence of the father. Esther was quick, as she came down before I had extracted from the pyramid the letters which were to compose my reply, but, as I knew what to say as soon as I saw her father read the answer she gave him, I was not long in finishing what I had to do.

M. d'O— asked if he should try to get rid of all the French securities he held, in spite of the loss he would incur by selling out. Esther's oracle replied:

"You must sow plentifully before you reap. Pluck not the vine before the season of the vintage, for your vine is planted in a fruitful soil."

Mine ran as follows:

"If you sell out, you will repent, for there will be a new comptroller-general, who will pay all claims before another year has elapsed."

Esther's answer was conceived in the sibylline style and I admired the readiness of her wit; but mine went right to the point, and the worthy man embraced us joyfully and, taking his hat and stick, said that, since our replies agreed, he would run the risk of losing three million francs and make a profit of five or six hundred thousand in the course of the year. His daughter began to recant and would have warned him against the danger, but he, who was as firm as a Mussulman, kissed her again, saying, "The oracle is not wont to lie and, even if it does deceive me this time, it will be only a fourth part of my fortune that I shall lose."

When Esther and I were alone, I began to compliment her, much to her delight, on the cleverness of her answer, the elegance of her style and her boldness, for she could not be as well acquainted with French affairs as I was.

"I am much obliged to you," said she, "for having confirmed my reply, but confess that you lied to please me."

"I confess, since that will please you, and I will even tell you that you have nothing more to learn."

"You are a cruel man! But how could you reply that there would be another comptroller-general in a year's time, and run the risk of compromising the oracle? I never dare to say things like that; I love the oracle too well to expose it to shame and confusion."

"That shows that I do not invent the answers; but, since the oracle has pronounced it, I am willing to bet that *de Silhouette* will be dismissed."

"Your obstinacy drives me to despair, for I shall not rest till I know that I am as much a master of the cabala as you are, and yet you will not confess that you invent the answers yourself. For charity's sake, do something to convince me of the contrary."

"I will think it over."

I passed the whole day with this delightful girl, whose amiable disposition and great wealth would have made me a happy man if it had not been for my master passion, the love of independence, and my aversion to make up my mind to live the rest of my days in Holland.

In the course of my life I have often observed that the happiest hours are often the heralds of misfortune. The very next day my evil genius took me to the *Ville de Lyon*. This was the inn where *Piccolomini* and his wife were staying and I found them there in the midst of a horde of cheats and sharpers like themselves. As soon as the good people heard my name, they rushed forward, some to greet me and others to have a closer look at me, as if I were some strange wild beast. Amongst those present were a *Chevalier de Sabi*, who wore the uniform of a Polish major and protested he had known me at *Dresden*; a *Baron de Wiedau*, claiming *Bohemia* as his fatherland, who greeted me by saying that his friend the *Comte de St. Germain* had arrived at the *Etoile d'Orient* and had been inquiring after me; an attenuated-looking bravo who was introduced to me as the *Chevalier de la Périne*, whom I recognised at the first glance as the fellow called *Talvis* who had robbed the *Prince-Bishop of Presburg*, who had lent me a hundred louis the same day and with whom I had fought a duel in *Paris*. Finally, there was an Italian named *Neri*, who looked like a blacksmith minus his honesty and said that he remembered seeing me one evening at the casino. I recollected having seen him at the place where I met the wretched *Lucie*.

In the midst of this band of cutpurses I saw the so-called wife of the pretended *Chevalier de Sabi*, a pretty woman from *Saxony*, who,

speaking Italian indifferently well, was paying her addresses to the Countess Piccolomini.

I bit my lips with anger to find myself in such honourable company but, putting a good face on a bad game, I greeted everybody politely and then, drawing a roll of a hundred louis from my pocket, I presented them to Master Périne Talvis, telling him I was glad to be able to return them to him with my best thanks.

My politeness did not meet with much of a reception, for the impudent scoundrel answered me, as he pocketed the money, that he remembered having lent it to me at Presburg, but he also remembered a more important matter.

"And pray what is that?" said I, in a dry and half-disdainful tone.

"You owe me a revenge at the sword's point, as you know right well. Here is the mark of the gash you gave me seven years ago."

So saying, the wretched little man opened his shirt and showed the small round scar. This scene, which belonged more to farce than comedy, seemed to have struck all tongues with paralysis.

"Anywhere else than in Holland, where important and delicate business debars me from fighting, I shall be glad to meet you and mark you again if you still desire to cross swords with me; but, while I am here, I must beg you not to disturb me. All the same, you may as well know that I never go out without a couple of friends in my pockets and that, if you attack me, I shall blow your brains out in self-defence."

"My revenge must be with crossed swords," said he. "However, I will let you finish your business."

"You will do wisely."

Piccolomini, who had been casting a hungry eye upon my hundred louis, proposed immediately afterwards a bank at faro and began to deal. Prudence would have restrained me from playing in such company, but the dictates of prudence were overcome by my desire to get back the hundred louis which I had given Talvis, so I cut in. I had a run of bad luck and lost a hundred ducats, but, as usual, my loss only excited me. I wished to regain what I had lost, so I stayed to supper and afterwards, with better luck, won back my money. I was content to stop at this and to let the money I had paid to Talvis go, so I asked Piccolomini to pay me, which he did with a bill of exchange on an Amsterdam bank, drawn by a firm in Middelburg. At first I made some objection to taking it, on the pretext that it would be difficult to negotiate, but he promised to let me have the money next day and I had to give in.

I made haste to leave this cutthroat place, after refusing to lend Talvis a hundred louis, which he wanted to borrow of me on the strength of the revenge I owed him. He was in a bad humour, both on this account and because he had lost the hundred louis I had paid him, and he allowed himself to use abusive language, which I treated with contempt. I went to bed, promising myself never to set foot in such a place again.

The next morning, however, I went out with the intention of calling on Piccolomini to get the bill of exchange cashed, but on the way I happened to go into a coffee-house and meet Rigerboos, Thérèse's friend, whose acquaintance the reader has already made. After greeting each other and talking about Thérèse, who was now in London and doing well, I showed him my bill, telling him the circumstances under which I had it. He looked at it closely and said, "It's a forgery and the original from which it was copied was honoured yesterday."

He saw that I could scarcely believe it and told me to come with him to be convinced of the truth of what he said.

He took me to a merchant of his acquaintance, who showed me the genuine bill, which he had cashed the day before for an individual who was unknown to him. In my indignation I begged Rigerboos to come with me to Piccolomini's, telling him that possibly the latter might cash it without remark, otherwise he would witness what happened.

We arrived at the count's and were politely received, the count asking me to give him the bill and he would send it to the bank to be cashed, but Rigerboos broke in by saying that it would be dishonoured, as it was a mere copy of a bill which had been cashed the evening before.

Piccolomini pretended to be greatly astonished and said that, though he could not believe it, he would "look into the matter."

"You may look into it when you please," said I, "but in the meantime I should be obliged by your giving me five hundred florins."

"You know me, sir," said he, raising his voice. "I guarantee to pay you, and that ought to be enough."

"No doubt it would be enough, if I chose; but I want my money."

At this his wife came in and began to take part in the dispute and on the arrival of the count's man, a very cutthroat, Rigerboos took hold of me by the arm and drew me forcibly away. "Follow me," said he, when we were outside, "and let me see to this business myself." He took me to a fine-looking man who turned out to be the lieutenant of police and, after he had heard the case, he told me to give him the bill of exchange and to say where I was going to dine. I told him I should be at M. d'O—'s and, saying that would do, he went off. I thanked Rigerboos and went to Esther, who reproached me tenderly for not having been to see her the evening before. That flattered me and I thought her a really charming girl.

"I must take care," said I, "not to see you every day, for your eyes have a sway over me that I shall not be able to resist much longer."

"I shall believe as much of that as I choose, but, by-the-by, have you thought of any way of convincing me?"

"What do you want to be convinced about?"

"If it be true that there is in your cabala an intelligence distinct from your own, you ought to be able to find some way of proving it to me."

"That is a happy thought; I will think it over."

At that moment her father came in from the Exchange and we sat down to dinner.

We were at dessert when a police official brought me five hundred florins, for which I gave him a receipt.

When he had gone, I told my entertainers what had happened the evening before and in the morning, and the fair Esther reproached me for preferring such bad company to her. "By way of punishment," said she, "I hope you will come with me to the theatre this evening, though they are going to give a Dutch play, of which you will not understand a word."

"I shall be near you and that is enough for me."

In fact, I did not comprehend a word of the actors' gibberish and was terribly bored, as Esther preserved a solemn and serious silence the whole time.

As we were coming from the theatre, she told me all about the piece with charming grace and wonderful memory; she seemed to wish to give me some pleasure in return for the tedium to which she had condemned me. When we got home, we had supper and that evening, Heaven be thanked! I heard nothing more about the cabala. Before we parted, Esther and her father made me promise to dine with them every day and to let them know if anything prevented my coming.

Next morning about eight o'clock, while I was still dressing, I suddenly saw Piccolomini standing before me and, as he had not sent in his name, I began to feel suspicious. I rang the bell for my faithful Spaniard, who came directly.

"I want to speak to you privately," said he. "Tell that fellow to go out."

"He can stay," I answered, "he does not know a word of Italian." Le Duc, of course, knew Italian perfectly well.

"Yesterday, about noon," he began, "two men came into my room. They were accompanied by the innkeeper, who served as interpreter. One of the men asked me if I felt inclined to cash there and then a forged bill of exchange which I had given the night before and which he held in his hands. As I gave no reply, he told me that there was no time for consideration or argument; I must say 'yes' or 'no' there and then, for such were the instructions from the chief of police. I had no choice in the matter, so I paid the five hundred florins, but I did not get back the bill, and the man told me I could not have it unless I told the police the name of the person from whom I got it, as, in the interests of commerce, the forger must be prosecuted. My reply was that I could not possibly tell them what they wanted, as I had got it of a stranger who had come into my room while I was holding a small bank of faro, to pass the time.

"I told them that, after this person (whom I had thought introduced by someone in the company) had gone, I found to my surprise that nobody knew him; and I added that, if I had been aware of this, I would not only have refused the bill but would not have allowed him

to play. Thereupon the second policeman said I had better find out who this person was or else I should be considered as the forger and prosecuted accordingly; after this threat they went out.

"In the afternoon my wife called on the chief of police and was politely received, but, after hearing what she had to say, he informed her that she must find out the forger, since M. Casanova's honour might be endangered by the banker taking proceedings against him, in which case he would have to prosecute me.

"You see in what a difficult position we are placed and I think you ought to try to help us. You have got your money and you are not without friends. Get their influence exerted in the matter and we shall hear no more about it. Your interests as well as mine are concerned."

"Except as a witness of the fact," I answered, "I can have nothing to do with this affair. You agree that I received the bill from you, since you cashed it; that is enough for me. I should be glad to be of service to you, but I really don't see what I can do. The best advice I can give to you is to make a sacrifice of the rascally sharper who gave you the forged bill and, if you can't do that, I would counsel you to disappear, and the sooner the better, or else you may come to the galleys or worse."

He got into a rage at this and, turning his back on me, went out, saying I should be sorry for what I had said.

My Spaniard followed him down the stair and came back to tell me that the *signor* had gone off threatening vengeance and that, in his opinion, I would do well to be on my guard.

"All right," said I, "say no more about it."

All the same, I was really very grateful for his advice and gave the matter a good deal of thought.

I dressed and went to see Esther, whom I had to convince of the divinity of my oracle, a difficult task with one whose own wits had told her so much concerning my methods. This was the problem she gave me to solve: "Your oracle must tell me something which I, and only I, know."

Feeling that it would be impossible to fulfill these conditions, I told her that the oracle might reveal some secret she might not care to have disclosed.

"That is impossible," she answered, "as the secret will be known only to myself."

"But, if the oracle replies, I shall know the answer as well as you and it may be something you would not like me to know."

"There is no such thing and, even if there were, if the oracle is not your own brain, you can always find out anything you want to know."

"But there is some limit to the powers of the oracle."

"You are making idle excuses; either prove that I am mistaken in my ideas or acknowledge that my oracle is as good as yours."

This was pushing me hard and I was on the point of declaring myself conquered when a bright idea struck me.

In the midst of the dimple which added such a charm to her chin, Esther had a little dark mole, garnished with three or four extremely fine hairs. These moles, which we call in Italian *neo nei* and which are usually an improvement to the prettiest face when they occur on the face, the neck, the arms or the hands, are duplicated on corresponding parts of the body. I concluded, therefore, that Esther had a mole like that on her chin in a certain place which a virtuous girl does not show; and, innocent as she was, I suspected that she herself did not know of this second mole's existence. "I shall astonish her," I said to myself, "and establish my superiority in a manner which will put the idea of having skill equal to mine out of her head for good." Then, with the solemn and far-away look of a seer, I made my pyramid and extracted these words from it:

"Fair and discreet Esther, no one knows that, at the entrance of the temple of love, you have a mole precisely like that which appears on your chin."

While I was working at my calculations, Esther was leaning over me and following every movement. As she really knew as much about the cabala as I did, she did not need it to be explained to her, but translated the numbers into letters as I wrote them down. As soon as I had extracted all the combinations of numbers from the pyramid, she said quietly that, as I did not want to know the answer, she would be much obliged if I would let her translate the cypher.

"With pleasure," I replied. "And I shall do so all the more willingly as I shall thereby save your delicacy from sharing with me a secret which may or may not be agreeable. I promise you not to try to find it out. It is enough for me to see you convinced."

"I shall be convinced when I have verified the truth of the reply."

"Are you persuaded, dearest Esther, that I have had nothing to do with framing this answer?"

"I shall be quite sure of it if it has spoken the truth, and, if so, the oracle will have conquered, for the matter is so secret a one that even I do not know of it. You need not know yourself, as it is only a trifle which would not interest you; but it will be enough to convince me that the answers of your oracle are dictated by an intelligence which has nothing in common with yours."

There was so much candour and frankness in what she said that a felling of shame replaced the desire of deceiving her, and I shed some tears, which Esther could only interpret favourably to me. Nevertheless, they were tears of remorse and now, as I write after such a lapse of years, I still regret having deceived one so worthy of my esteem and love. Even then I reproached myself, but a pitiable feeling of shame would not let me tell the truth; but I hated myself for thus leading astray one whose esteem I desired to gain.

In the meantime I was not absolutely sure that I had hit the mark, for in nature, like everything else, every law has its exceptions and I

might possibly have dug a pitfall for myself. On the other hand, if I were right, Esther would no doubt be convinced for the moment, but her belief would speedily disappear if she chanced to discover that the correspondence of moles on the human body was a necessary law of nature. In that case I might expect only her scorn. But, however I might tremble, I had carried the deception too far and could not draw back.

I left Esther to call on Rigerboos, whom I thanked for his offices on my behalf with the chief of police. He told me that I had nothing to fear from Piccolomini in Holland, but all the same he advised me not to go about without pistols. "I am on the eve of embarking for Batavia," said he, "in a vessel which I have laden with the ruins of my fortune. In the state my affairs are in, I thought this the best plan. I have not insured the cargo, so as not to diminish my profits, which will be considerable if I succeed. If the ship is taken or wrecked, I shall take care not to survive its loss; and, after all, I shall not lose much."

Poor Rigerboos said all this as if he were jesting, but despair had no doubt a good deal to do with this resolve, since it is only in great misery that we despise both life and fortune. The charming Thérèse Trenti, whom Rigerboos always spoke of as "our lady," had contributed to his ruin in no small degree. She was then in London, where, by her own account, she was doing well. She had exchanged the name of Trenti for that of Cornelis, or Cornely, which, as I found out afterwards, was Rigerboos's real name. We spent an hour in writing to this curious woman, as we desired to take advantage of the circumstance that a man whom Rigerboos desired to commend to her was shortly going to England. When we had finished, we went sleighing on the Amstel, which had been frozen over for several days. This diversion, of which the Dutch are very fond, is to my thinking the dullest imaginable, for an objectless journey is no pleasure to me. After we were well frozen, we went to eat oysters and warm ourselves again with Sillery; after that we went from one casino to another, not intending to commit any debauchery, but for want of something better to do; but it seemed decreed that, whenever I preferred any amusement of this kind to the charms of Esther's society, I should come to grief.

I do not know how it happened, but, as we were going into one of these casinos, Rigerboos called me loudly by my name and at that instant a woman, such as one usually finds in these places, came forward and began to gaze at me. Although the room was ill enough lighted, I saw it was the wretched Lucie, whom I had met a year before without her recognising me. I turned away, pretending not to know her, for the sight of her was disagreeable to me, but in a sad voice she called me by my name, congratulating me on my prosperity and bewailing her own wretchedness. I saw that I could neither avoid her nor repulse her without inhumanity, so I called to Rigerboos to come upstairs and the girl would divert us by recounting the history of her life.

Strictly speaking, Lucie had not become ugly; one could still see

that she had been a beautiful woman; but, for all that, her appearance inspired me with terror and disgust. Since the days when I had known her at Paséan, nineteen years of misery, profligacy and shame had made her the most debased, the vilest creature that can be imagined. She told us her story at great length; the pith of it might be expressed in six lines.

The footman who had seduced her had taken her to Trieste to lie in, and the scoundrel lived on the sale of her charms for five to six months, and then a sea captain, who had taken a fancy to her, took her to Zante with the footman, who passed for her husband.

At Zante the footman turned soldier and deserted the army four years after. She was left alone and continued living on the wages of prostitution for six years; but, the goods she had to offer lowering in value and her customers being of the inferior kind, she set out for England with a young Greek girl, whom an English officer of marines treated as his wife and whom he abandoned in the streets of London when he got tired of her. After living for two or three years in the vilest haunts in London, Lucie came to Holland, where, not being able to sell her own person any longer, she became a procuress—a natural ending of her career. Lucie was only thirty-three, but she was the wreck of a woman, and women are always as old as they look.

While she told her history, she emptied two bottles of burgundy I had ordered and which neither I nor my friend touched. Finally she told us she was now supported by two pretty girls whom she kept and who had to give her half of what they got.

Rigerboos asked her, jokingly, if the girls were at the casino.

"No," said she, "they are not here and shall never come here, for they are ladies of high birth and their uncle, who looks after their interests, is a Venetian gentleman."

At this I could not keep back my laughter, but Lucie, without losing countenance, told me that she could only repeat the account they had given of themselves, that, if we wanted to be convinced, we had only to go and see them at a house she rented fifty paces off and that we need not be afraid of being disturbed if we went, as their uncle lived in a different part of the town.

"Oh, indeed!" said I, "he does not live with his highborn nieces, then?"

"No, he only comes to dinner to hear how business has been going and to take all the money from them."

"Come along," said Rigerboos, "we will go and see them."

As I was desirous of seeing and addressing the noble Venetian ladies of so honourable a profession, I told Lucie to take us to the house. I knew very well that the girls were impostors and their gentleman-uncle a blackguard, but the die was cast.

We found them to be young and pretty. Lucie introduced me as a Venetian and they were beside themselves with joy to have someone to whom they could talk. I found out directly that they came from Padua, not Venice, as they spoke the Paduan dialect, which I knew

very well. I told them so and they confessed it was the truth. I asked the name of their uncle but they said they could not tell me.

"We can get on without knowing," said Rigerboos, catching hold of the one he liked the best. Lucie brought in some ham, oysters, a pie and a good many bottles of wine and then left us.

I was not in the humour for wantonness, but Rigerboos was disposed to be merry; his sweetheart was at first inclined to be prudish on his taking liberties with her, but, as I began to follow his example, the ladies relaxed their severity; we went first to one and then the other, and before long they were both in the state of Eve before she used the fig-leaf.

After passing an hour in these lascivious combats, we gave each of the girls four ducats, paid for the provisions we had consumed and sent six louis to Lucie. We then left them, I going to bed, cross with myself for having engaged in such brutal pleasures.

Next morning I awoke late and in a bad humour, partly from the debauch of the night before (for profligacy depresses as well as degrades the mind) and partly from the thought that I had neglected Esther, who had unquestionably been grieved by my absence. I felt that I must hasten to reassure her, feeling certain that I should find some excuses to make and that they would be well received. I rang for Le Duc, put on my dressing-gown and sent him for my coffee. He had scarcely left the room when the door opened and I saw Périne and the fellow named Wiedau, whom I had seen at Piccolomini's and who styled himself a friend of St. Germain. I was sitting on my bed, putting on my stockings. My apartments consisted of three fine rooms, but they were at the back of the house and all the noise I could have made would not have been heard. The bell was on the other side of the room; Le Duc would be gone fully ten minutes, and I was in imminent danger of being assassinated without the possibility of self-defence.

The above thoughts flashed through my head with lightning speed and all that I could do was to keep calm and say, "Well, gentlemen, what can I do for you?" Wiedau took it upon himself to answer me.

"Count Piccolomini has found himself forced to declare that he received the forged bill from us, in order that he may escape from the difficult position in which your denunciation placed him. He has warned us that he is going to do so and we must escape forthwith if we want to avoid prosecution. We have not a penny; we are desperate men."

"Well, gentlemen, what have I to do with that?"

"Give us four hundred florins immediately; we do not want more, but we must have that much, and now. If you refuse we will take to flight with everything of yours that we can lay our hands on; and our arguments are these."

With this, each man drew a pistol from his pocket and aimed it at my head.

"You need not have recourse to violence," said I, "it can only be fatal to you. Stay, here are a hundred ducats, more than you asked.

Begone, and I wish you a pleasant journey, but I would not be here when my servant comes back if I were you."

Wiedau took the roll of money with a trembling hand and put it in his pocket without examining it; but Périne came up and, praising my noble generosity, would have put his arms round my neck and kissed me. I repulsed him, but without rudeness, and they went their ways, leaving me very glad to have rid myself of them at so cheap a rate.

As soon as I was out of this snare, I rang my bell, not to have them followed but that I might get dressed as quickly as possible. I did not say a word to Le Duc about what had happened, I was silent even to my landlord; and, after I had sent my Spaniard to M. d'O— to excuse my not dining there that day, I went to the chief of police, but had to wait two hours before I could see him. As soon as the worthy man had heard my account of my misfortune, he said he would do his best to catch the two rascals, but he did not conceal from me his fears that it was already too late.

I took the opportunity of telling him of Piccolomini's visit to me, his claims and threats. He thanked me for doing so and promised to see to it; but he advised me in future to be on my guard and ready to defend myself in case I was attacked before he could put my enemies in a place where they could do me no harm. I hastened home again, as I felt ill. An acid taste in my mouth showed me how all these shocks had upset me, but I knew what to do; I took a strong glass of lemonade, which made me bring up a good deal of bile, and I then felt much better.

Towards evening I went to see Esther and found her looking serious and rather vexed; but, as soon as she saw how pale I was, her face lighted up and she asked me, in a voice of tenderest interest, if I had been ill. I told her I had been out of sorts, that I had taken some medicine and that I now felt better.

"You will see my appetite at supper," I added, to calm her fears. "I have had nothing to eat since dinner yesterday."

This was really the truth, as I had eaten only a few oysters with the Paduan girls.

She could scarcely contain her joy at my recovery and bade me kiss her, with which request I complied gladly, all unworthy though I felt of so great a favour.

"I am going to tell you an important piece of news," said she, "and that is that I am sure you do not invent the answers to your oracle, or at least that you do so only when you choose. The reply you procured me was wonderful—nay, divine, for it told me of a secret unknown to all, even to myself. You may imagine my surprise when I convinced myself, with no little trouble, of the truth of the answer.

"You possess a treasure, your oracle is infallible; but surely it can never lie, and my oracle tells me that you love me. It makes me glad to know that, for you are the man of my heart. But I want you to give me an exemplary proof of your love and, if you do love me,

you will not hesitate to do so. Stay, read the reply you got me, I am sure you do not know what it says; then I will tell you how you can make me quite happy."

I pretended to read and kissed the words which declared I loved her. "I am delighted," said I, "that the oracle has convinced you so easily, but I must be excused if I say that I believe you knew as much long ago." She replied, blushing, that, if it were possible to show me the object in question, I should not wonder at her ignorance. Then, coming to the proof of my love, she told me that she wanted me to communicate the secret to her. "You love me," said she, "and you ought to make no objection to assuring the bliss of a girl who will be your wife and in your power. My father will agree to our marriage and, when I become your wife, I will do whatever you please. We will even go and live in another country if that would add to your happiness. But you must teach me how to obtain the answer to any question without inventing it myself."

I took Esther's hands in mine; she inspired me with the tenderest feelings, and I kissed her hands with respectful fervour, saying, "You know, Esther dear, that my word is pledged in Paris. Certainly, Manon is not to be compared to you; but, for all of that, I gave my promise to her poor mother, and I must keep it."

A sigh escaped from Esther and her head fell upon her breast, but what could I do? I could not teach her any other way of consulting the oracle than the method she understood as well as I, my superiority over her consisting only in my greater craft and more extensive experience.

Early one morning two or three days later, a man was announced as wanting to see me. He called himself an officer, but his name was perfectly unknown to me. I sent down to say that I could not see him and, as soon as my Spaniard went out, I locked the door. What had happened already had made me suspicious and I did not care to see any more gentlemen alone. The two scoundrels who had robbed me had eluded all the snares of the police and Piccolomini was not to be found, but I knew a good many of the gang were still in Amsterdam and I thought it well to be on my guard.

Some time after Le Duc came in with a letter written in bad Italian, saying that it had been given him by an officer who was waiting for an answer. I opened it and recognised the name I had heard a short while before. The writer said we knew each other, but that he could give his true name only with his own lips and that he had important information to give me.

I told Le Duc to show him in and to stay by the door. I saw enter a well built man of about forty, dressed in the uniform of an officer of some army or other and bearing on his countenance all the marks of an escaped gallows-bird.

"What can I do for you, sir?" said I, as soon as he entered.

"Sir, we knew each other at Cerigo, sixteen or seventeen years ago,

and I am delighted to have an opportunity of renewing the acquaintance."

I knew that I had spent but a few minutes at Cerigo, on my way to Constantinople, and concluded that my visitor must be one of the unfortunate wretches to whom I gave alms.

"Are you the man," I said, "who told me that you were the son of a Count Peccini, of Padua, although there is no such count in Padua at all?"

"I congratulate you on your excellent memory," said he, coolly. "I am that very individual."

"Well, what do you want with me now?"

"I can't divulge my business in the presence of your servant."

"My servant does not understand Italian, so you can speak out; however, if you like, I will send him away."

I ordered Le Duc to stay in the ante-chamber and, when he had left the room, my Paduan count told me that I had been with his nieces and had treated them as if they were courtesans and that he was come to demand satisfaction.

I was tired of being cheated and I took hold of my pistols and pointed them at him, bidding him be gone instantly. Le Duc came in and the third robber took himself off, muttering that "a time would come."

I was placed in a disagreeable position; if I wanted to prosecute, I should have to tell the whole story to the police. I thought of my honour and determined to be silent, and the only person to whom I mentioned the matter was Rigerboos, who, not being in the same position as myself took his measures, the result of which was that Lucie had to send her highborn dames about their business. But the wretched woman came to me to say that this misfortune had plunged her into the deepest distress, so I made her a present of a few ducats and she went her way somewhat consoled. I begged her not to call on me again.

Everything I did when I was away from Esther seemed to turn out ill, and I felt that, if I wanted to be happy, I should do well to keep near her; but my destiny, or rather my inconstancy, drew me away.

Three days afterwards the villainous Major Sabi called on me to warn me to be on my guard, as, according to his account, a Venetian officer I had insulted and refused to give satisfaction to had vowed vengeance against me.

"Then," said I, "I shall have him arrested as an escaped galley slave, in which character I have given him alms, and for wearing without the right to do so the uniform of an officer, thereby disgracing the whole army. And pray what outrage can I have committed against girls who live in a brothel and whom I paid according to their deserts?"

"If what you say is true, you are quite right, but this poor devil is in a desperate situation; he wants to leave the country and does not

possess a single florin. I advise you to give him alms once more and you will have done with him. Two-score florins will not make you any the poorer and will rid you of a villainous enemy."

"A most villainous one, I think." At last I agreed to give him the forty florins and handed them to him in a coffee-house where the major told me I should find him. The reader will see how I met this blackguard four months later.

Now, when all these troubles have been long past and I can think over them calmly, reflecting on the annoyances I experienced in Amsterdam, where I might have been so happy, I am forced to admit that we ourselves are the authors of almost all our woes and griefs, of which we so unreasonably complain. If I could live my life over again, should I be wiser? Perhaps; but then I should not be myself.

M. d'O— asked me to sup with him at the Burgomasters' Lodge and this was a great distinction, for, contrary to the rules of Freemasonry, no one is admitted but the twenty-four members who compose the lodge and these twenty-four masons were the richest men on the exchange.

"I have told them you are coming," said M. d'O—, "and, to welcome you most honourably, the lodge will be opened in French." In short, these gentlemen gave me the most distinguished reception, and I had the fortune to make myself so agreeable to them that I was unanimously chosen an honorary member during the time I should stay in Amsterdam. As we were going away, M. d'O— told me that I had supped with a company which represented a capital of three hundred millions.

Next day the worthy Dutchman begged me to oblige him by answering a question to which his daughter's oracle had replied in a very obscure manner. Esther encouraged me and I asked what the question was. It ran as follows:

"I wish to know whether the individual who desires me and my company to transact a matter of the greatest importance is really a friend of the King of France."

It was not difficult for me to divine that the Comte de St. Germain was meant. M. d'O— was not aware that I knew him and I had not forgotten what M. d'Afri had told me.

"Here's a fine opportunity," thought I, "for covering my oracle with glory and giving my fair Esther something to think about."

I set to work and, after erecting my pyramid and placing above the four keys the letters O, S, A, D, the better to impose on Esther, I extracted the reply, beginning with the fourth key, D. The oracle ran as follows:

"The friend disavows... The order is signed... They grant... They refuse... All vanishes... Delay."

I pretended to think the reply a very obscure one, but Esther gave a cry of astonishment and declared that it gave a lot of information in an extraordinary style. M. d'O—, in an ecstasy of delight, exclaimed:

"The reply is clear enough for me. The oracle is divine; the word

"delay" is addressed to me. You and my daughter are clever enough in making the oracle speak, but I am more skilled than you in the interpretation thereof. I shall prevent the thing going any further. The project is no less a one than to lend a hundred millions, taking in pledge the diamonds of the French Crown. The King wishes the loan to be concluded without the interference of his ministers and without their even knowing anything about it. I entreat you not to mention the matter to anyone."

He then went out.

"Now," said Esther, when we were by ourselves, "I am quite sure that that reply came from another intelligence than yours. In the name of all you hold sacred, tell me the meaning of those four letters and why you usually omit them."

"I omit them, dearest Esther, because experience has taught me that in ordinary cases they are unnecessary; but, while I was making the pyramid, the command came to me to set them down and I thought it well to obey."

"What do they mean?"

"They are the initial letters of the holy names of the cardinal intelligences of the four quarters of the world."

"What are the names?"

"I may not tell you, but whoever deals with the oracle should know them."

"Ah! do not deceive me; I trust in you and it would be worse than murder to abuse so simple a faith as mine."

"I am not deceiving you, dearest Esther."

"But, if you were to teach me the cabala, you would impart to me these holy names?"

"Certainly, but I cannot reveal them except to my successor. If I violate this command, I lose my knowledge; and this condition is well calculated to insure secrecy, is it not?"

"It is, indeed. Unhappy woman that I am, your successor will be, of course, Manon."

"No, Manon is not fitted intellectually for such knowledge as this."

"But you should fix on someone, for you are mortal, after all. If you like, my father would give you the half of his immense fortune without your marrying me."

"Esther! what have you said? Do you think that to possess you would be a disagreeable condition in my eyes?"

After a happy day—I think I may call it the happiest of my life—I left the too charming Esther and went home towards the evening.

Three or four days after M. d'O— came into Esther's room, where he found us both calculating pyramids. I was teaching her to double, triple and quadruple the cabalistic combinations. M. d'O— strode into the room in a great hurry, striking his breast in a sort of ecstasy. We were surprised and almost frightened to see him so strangely excited, and rose to meet him, but he, running up to us, almost forced us to embrace him, which we did willingly.

"But what is the matter, papa dear?" said Esther. "You surprise me more than I can say."

"Sit down beside me, my dear children, and listen to your father and your best friend. I have just received a letter from one of the secretaries of Their High Mightinesses, informing me that the French ambassador has demanded, in the name of the King his master, that the Comte de St. Germain should be delivered over, and that the Dutch authorities have answered that His Most Christian Majesty's request shall be carried out as soon as the person of the count can be secured. In consequence of this, the police, knowing that the Comte de St. Germain was staying at the Etoile d'Orient, sent to arrest him at midnight, but the bird had flown. The landlord declared that the count had posted off at nightfall, taking the way to Nimeguen. He has been followed, but there are small hopes of catching him up. It is not known how he can have discovered that a warrant existed against him, or how he continued to evade arrest.

"It is not *known*," went on M. d'O—, laughing, "but everyone guesses that M. Calcoen, the same that wrote to me, let this friend of the French King know that he would be wanted at midnight and that, if he did not take to the woods, he would be arrested. He is not so foolish as to despise a piece of advice like that. The Dutch Government has expressed its sorrow to M. d'Afri that His Excellence did not demand the arrest of St. Germain sooner, and the ambassador will not be astonished at this reply, as it is like many others given on similar occasions.

"The wisdom of the oracle has been verified and I congratulate myself on having seized its meaning, for we were on the point of giving him a hundred thousand florins on account, which he said he must have immediately. He gave us in pledge the finest of the Crown diamonds and this we still retain. But we will return it to him on demand, unless it is claimed by the ambassador. I have never seen a finer stone.

"And now, my children, you see what I owe to the oracle. On the Exchange the whole company can do nothing but express their gratitude to me. I am regarded as the most prudent and most far-seeing man in Holland. To you, my dear children, I owe this honour, but I wear my peacock's feathers without scruple.

"My dear Casanova, you will dine with us, I hope. After dinner I shall beg you to inquire of your inscrutable intelligence whether we ought to declare ourselves in possession of the splendid diamond or observe secrecy till it is reclaimed."

After this discourse papa embraced us once more and left us.

"Sweetheart," said Esther, throwing her arms around my neck, "you have an opportunity for giving me a strong proof of your friendship. It will cost you nothing but it will cover me with honour and happiness.

"Command me and it shall be done. You cannot think that I would refuse you a favour which is to cost me nothing, when I should deem myself happy to shed my blood for your sake."

"My father wishes you to tell him after dinner whether it will be

better to declare that they have the diamond or to keep silence till it is claimed. When he asks you a second time, tell him to seek the answer of me and offer to consult the oracle also, in case my answer may be too obscure. Then perform the operation and I will extract the answer from my pyramid. This will make my father love me all the better when he sees that my knowledge is equal to yours."

"Dearest one, would I not do for thee a task a thousand times more difficult than this to prove my love and my devotion? Let us set to work. Do thou write the questions, set up the pyramids and inscribe with thine own hand the all-powerful initials. Good. Now begin to extract the answer by means of the divine key. Never was a cleverer pupil!"

When all this had been done, I suggested the additions and subtractions I wanted made and she was quite astonished to read the following reply:

"Silence necessary. Without silence, general derision. Diamond valueless; mere paste."

I thought she would go wild with delight. She laughed and laughed again.

"What an amazing reply!" said she. "The diamond is false and it is I who am about to reveal their folly to them. I shall inform my father of this important secret. It is too much, it overwhelms me; I can scarcely contain myself for joy! How much I owe you, you wonderful and delightful man! They will verify the truth of the oracle immediately and, when it is found that the famous diamond is but glittering paste, the company will adore my father, for it will feel that, but for him, it would have been covered with shame by avowing itself the dupe of a sharper. Will you leave the pyramid with me?"

"Certainly; but it will not teach you anything you do not know." The father came in again and we had dinner, and after the dessert, when the worthy d'O— learnt from his daughter's oracle that the stone was false, the scene became a truly comical one. He burst into exclamations of astonishment, declared the thing impossible, incredible, and at last begged me to ask the same question, as he was quite sure that his daughter was mistaken, or rather that the oracle was deluding her.

I set to work and was not long in obtaining my answer. When he saw that it was to the same effect as Esther's, though differently expressed, he had no longer any doubts as to his daughter's skill and hastened to go and test the pretended diamond and advise his associates to say nothing about the matter after they had received proofs of the worthlessness of the stone. This advice was, as it happened, useless, for, though the persons concerned said nothing, everybody knew about it and people said, with their usual malice, that the dupes had been duped most thoroughly and that St. Germain had pocketed the hundred thousand florins; but this was not the case.

Esther was very proud of her success but, instead of being satisfied with what she had done, she desired more fervently every day to possess the science in its entirety, as she supposed I possessed it.

It soon became known that St. Germain had gone by Emden and had embarked for England, where he had arrived in safety. In due time we shall hear some further details concerning this celebrated impostor; and in the meanwhile I must relate a catastrophe of another kind, which was near to have made me die the death of a fool.

It was Christmas Day. I had got up early in the morning in better spirits than usual. The old women tell you that this always presages misfortune, but I was as far then as I am now from making my happiness into an omen of grief. But this time chance made the foolish belief of good effect. I received a letter and a large packet from Paris; they came from Manon. I opened the letter and thought I should die of grief when I read:

"Be wise and receive the news I give you calmly. The packet contains your portrait and all the letters you have written me. Return me my portrait and, if you have kept my letters, be kind enough to burn them. I rely on your honour. Think of me no more. Duty bids me do all I can to forget you, for at this hour to-morrow I shall become the wife of M. Blondel of the Royal Academy, architect to the King. Please do not seem as if you knew me if we chance to meet on your return to Paris."

This letter struck me dumb with astonishment and, for more than two hours after I read it, I was, as it were, bereft of my senses. I sent word to M. d'O— that, not feeling well, I was going to keep my room all day. When I felt a little better, I opened the packet. The first thing to fall out was my portrait. I looked at it and such was the perturbation of my mind that, though the miniature really represented me as of a cheerful and animated expression, I thought I beheld a dreadful and threatening visage. I went to my desk and wrote and tore up a score of letters, in which I overwhelmed the faithless one with threats and reproaches.

I could bear no more; the forces of nature were exhausted and I was obliged to lie down and take a little broth and court that sleep which refused to come. A thousand designs came to my disordered imagination. I rejected them one by one, only to devise new ones. I would slay this Blondel, who had carried off a woman who was mine and mine only, who was all but my wife. Her treachery should be punished by her losing the object for whom she had deserted me. I accused her father, I cursed her brother for having left me in ignorance of the insult which had so traitorously been put upon me.

I spent the day and night in these delirious thoughts and in the morning, feeling worse than ever, I sent to M. d'O— to say that I could not possibly leave my room. Then I began to read and re-read the letters I had written to Manon, calling upon her name in a sort of frenzy; and again I set myself to write to her without finishing a single letter. The emptiness of my stomach and the shock I had undergone began to stupefy me and for a few moments I forgot my anguish, only to re-awaken to acuter pains soon after.

About three o'clock the worthy M. d'O— came to invite me to go

with him to The Hague, where the chief masons of Holland met on the day following to keep the Feast of St. John, but, when he saw my condition, he did not press me to come.

"What is the matter with you, my dear Casanova?" said he.

"I have had a great grief, but let us say no more about it."

He begged me to come and see Esther, and left me, looking almost as downcast as I was. However, the next morning Esther anticipated my visit, for at nine o'clock she and her governess came into the room. The sight of her did me good. She was astonished to see me so undone and cast down and asked me what was the grief of which I had spoken to her father and which had proved too strong for my philosophy.

"Sit down beside me, Esther dear, and allow me to make a mystery of what has affected me so grievously. Time, the mighty healer, and still more your company will effect a cure which I should in vain seek by appealing to my reason. Whilst we talk of other things, I shall not feel the misfortune which gnaws at my heart."

"Well, get up, dress and come and spend the day with me, and I will do my best to make you forget your sorrow."

"I feel very weak; for the last three days I have taken only a little broth and chocolate."

At these words her face fell and she began to weep.

After a moment's silence she went to my desk, took a pen and wrote a few lines, which she brought to me. They were:

"Dear: If a large sum of money, beyond what my father owes you, can remove or even soothe your grief, I can be your doctor, and you ought to know that your accepting my treatment would make me happy."

I took her hands and kissed them affectionately, saying:

"No, dear Esther, generous Esther, it is not money I need, for, if I did, I would ask you and your father as a friend; what I need, and what no one can give me, is a resolute mind and determination to act for the best."

"Ask advice of your oracle."

I could not help laughing.

"Why do you laugh?" said she. "If I am not mistaken, the oracle must know a remedy for your woes."

"I laughed, dearest, because I felt inclined to say it was you who should consult the oracle this time. As for me, I will have nothing to do with it, lest the cure be worse than the disease."

"But you need not follow its advice unless you like it."

"No, one is free to act as one thinks fit; but not to follow the advice of the oracle would be a contempt of the intelligence which directs it."

Esther could say no more and stood silent for several minutes, and then said that, if I liked, she would stay with me for the rest of the day. The joy which illumined my countenance was manifest, and I said that, if she would stay to dinner, I would get up and no doubt her presence would give me an appetite. "Ah!" said she, "I will make you the dish you are so fond of." She ordered the sedan chairs to be sent

back and went to my landlady to order an appetising repast and procure the chafing dish and the spirits of wine she required for her own cooking.

Esther was an angel, a treasure, who consented to become mine if I would communicate to her a science which did not exist. I felt that I was looking forward to spending a happy day; this showed me that I could forget Manon and I was delighted with the idea. I got out of bed and, when Esther came back and found me on my feet, she gave a skip of pleasure. "Now," she said, "you must oblige me by dressing and doing your hair as if you were going to a ball."

"That," I answered, "is a funny idea but, as it pleases you, it pleases me."

I rang for Le Duc and told him I wanted to have my hair done and to be dressed as if I were going to a ball. "Choose the dress that suits me best."

"No," said Esther, "I will choose it myself."

Le Duc opened my trunk and, leaving her to rummage in it, he came to shave me and do my hair. Esther, delighted with her task, called in the assistance of the governess. She put on my bed a lace shirt and the suit she found most to her taste. Then, coming close, as if to see whether Le Duc was dressing my hair properly, she said, "A little broth would do you good; send for a dish, it will give you an appetite for dinner."

I thought her advice dictated by the tenderest care, and I determined to benefit by it. So great was the influence of this charming girl over me that, little by little, instead of loving Manon, I hated her. That gave me courage and completed my cure. At the present time I can see that Manon was very wise in accepting Blondel's offer and that my love for self and not my love for her was wounded.

I was in my servant's hands, my face turned away towards the fire, so that I could not see Esther, but only divert myself with the idea that she was inspecting my belongings, when all at once she presented herself with a melancholy air, holding Manon's fatal letter in her hand.

"Am I to blame," said she, timidly, "for having discovered the cause of your sorrow?"

I felt rather taken aback, but, looking kindly at her, I said, "No, no, my dear Esther; pity your friend and say no more about it."

"Then I may read all the letters?"

"Yes, dearest, if it will amuse you."

All the letters of the faithless Manon Baletti to me, with mine to her, were together on my table. I pointed them out to Esther, who began to read them quite eagerly.

When I was dressed, as if for some Court holiday, Le Duc went out and left us by ourselves, for the worthy governess, who was working at her lace by the window, looked at her lace and nothing else. Esther said that nothing had ever amused her so much as those letters.

"Those cursed epistles, which please you so well, will be the death of me."

"Death? Oh, no; I will cure you, I hope."

"I hope so, too; but after dinner you must help me to burn them all from first to last."

"Burn them! No, make me a present of them. I promise to keep them carefully all my days."

"They are yours, Esther. I will send them to you to-morrow."

These letters were more than two hundred in number, and the shortest were four pages in length. She was enchanted to find herself the possessor of the letters and said she would make them into a parcel and take them away herself.

"Shall you send back the portrait to your faithless mistress?" said she.

"I don't know what to do with it."

"Send it back to her; she is not worthy of your honouring her by keeping it. I am sure that your oracle would give you the same advice. Where is the portrait? Will you show it me?"

I had the portrait in the interior of a gold snuffbox, but I had never shown it to Esther for fear she should think Manon handsomer than herself and conclude that I showed it to her only out of vanity; but, as she now asked to see it, I opened the box where it was and gave it to her.

Any other woman beside Esther would have pronounced Manon downright ugly or have endeavoured at the least to find some fault with her, but Esther pronounced her to be very beautiful and only said it was a great pity so fair a body contained so vile a soul. The sight of Manon's portrait made Esther ask to see all the other portraits which Madame Manzoni had sent me from Venice. There were naked figures amongst them, but Esther was too pure a spirit to put on the hateful affectations of the prude, to whom everything natural is an abomination. *O-Morphi* pleased her very much, and her history, which I related, struck her as very curious. The portrait of the fair nun M—M—, first in the habit of her order and afterwards naked, made her laugh, but I would not tell Esther her story, in spite of the lively desire she displayed to hear it.

At dinner-time a delicate repast was brought to us and we spent two delightful hours in the pleasures of conversation and the table. I seemed to have passed from death to life and Esther was delighted to have been my physician. Before we rose from table, I had declared my intention of sending Manon's portrait to her husband on the day following, but her good nature found a way of dissuading me from doing so without much difficulty.

Some time after, while we were talking in front of the fire, she took a piece of paper, set up the pyramids and inscribed the four keys O, S, A, D. She asked if I should send the portrait to the husband or whether it would not be more generous to return it to the faithless Manon. Whilst she was calculating, she said over and over again, with a smile, "I have not made up the answer." I pretended to believe her and we laughed like two augurs meeting each other alone. At last the

reply came that I ought to return the portrait, but to the giver, since to send it to the husband would be an act unworthy of a man of honour.

I praised the wisdom of the oracle and kissed the Pythoness a score of times, promising that the cabala should be obeyed implicitly, adding that she had no need of being taught the science, since she knew it as well as the inventor.

I spoke the truth, but Esther laughed and, fearing lest I should really think so, took pains to assure me of the contrary.

It is thus that love takes his pleasure, thus that his growth increases and thus that he so soon becomes a giant in strength.

"Shall I be impertinent," said Esther, "if I ask you where your portrait is? Manon says in her letter that she is sending it back, but I don't see it anywhere."

"In my first paroxysm of rage I threw it down; I don't know in what direction. What was thus despised by her cannot be of much value to me."

"Let us look for it; I should like to see it."

We soon found it on my table, in the midst of a pile of books; Esther said it was a speaking likeness.

"I would give it to you if such a present were worthy of you."

"Ah! you could not give me anything I would value more."

"Will you deign to accept it, Esther, though it has been possessed by another?"

"It will be all the dearer to me."

At last she had to leave me, after a day which might be called delightful if happiness consists of calm and mutual joys without the tumultuous raptures of passion. She went away at ten, after I had promised to spend the whole of the next day with her.

After an unbroken sleep of nine hours' duration I got up refreshed and, feeling once more in perfect health, went to see Esther immediately. I found she was still abed and asleep, but her governess went and roused her in spite of my request that her repose should be respected.

She received me with a sweet smile as she sat up in bed, and showed me my voluminous correspondence with Manon on her night table, saying that she had been reading it till two o'clock in the morning.

Her appearance was ravishing. A pretty cambric nightcap, tied with a light blue ribbon and ornamented with lace, set off the beauties of her face; and a light shawl of Indian muslin, which she had hastily thrown on, veiled rather than concealed her snowy breast, which would have shamed the works of Praxiteles. She allowed me to take a hundred kisses from her rosy lips, ardent kisses which the sight of such charms made yet more ardent; but her hands forbade my approach to those two spheres I so longed to touch.

I sat down by her and told her that her charms of body and mind would make a man forget all the Manons that ever were.

"Is your Manon fair to see all over?" said she.

"I really can't say, for, not being her husband, I never had an opportunity of investigating the matter."

"Your discretion is worthy of all praise," she said, with a smile. "Such conduct becomes a man of delicate feeling."

"I was told by her nurse that she was perfect in all respects and that no mote or blemish marred the pure whiteness of her skin."

"You must have a different notion of me."

"Yes, Esther, as the oracle revealed to me the great secret you desired to know. Nevertheless, I should find you perfect in all your parts."

This incident only increased our intimacy, for the same desires consumed us and, if the voice of prudence had not intervened, doubtless all would have been over. As it was, we had but a foretaste and an earnest of that bliss which it was in our power to procure. Three hours seemed to us as many minutes. She begged me to go into her sitting-room while she dressed, and we then went down and dined with the wretched secretary, who adored her, whom she did not love and who must have borne small love to me, seeing how high I stood in her graces.

We passed the rest of the day together in that confidential talk which is usual when the foundations of the most intimate friendship have been laid between two persons of opposite sex, who believe themselves created for each other. Our flames burnt as brightly in the dining-room as in the bedroom, but with more restraint. In the very air of the bedroom of a woman one loves there is something so balmy and voluptuous that the lover, asked to choose between this garden of delights and Paradise, would not for one moment hesitate in his choice.

We parted with hearts full of happiness, saying to each other, "Till to-morrow."

I was truly in love with Esther, for my sentiment for her was composed of sweeter, calmer and more lively feelings than mere sensual love, which is ever stormy and violent. I felt sure I could persuade her to marry me without my first teaching her what could not be taught. I was sorry I had not let her think herself as clever as I in the cabala, and I feared it would be impossible to undeceive her without exciting her to anger, which would cast out love. Nevertheless, Esther was the only woman who could make me forget Manon, whom I began to think unworthy of all I had proposed doing for her.

M. d'O— came back and I went to dine with him. He was pleased to hear that his daughter had effected a complete cure by spending a day with me. When we were alone, he told me that he had heard at The Hague that the Comte de St. Germain had the art of making diamonds which differed from the real ones only in weight and which, according to him, would make his fortune. M. d'O— would have been amused if I had told him all I knew about this charlatan.

Next day I took Esther to the concert and, while we were there, she told me that on the day following she would not leave her room, so that we could talk about getting married without fear of interruption. This was the last day of the year 1759.

CHAPTER 66

THE appointment which Esther had made with me would probably have serious results, and I felt it due to my honour not to deceive her any longer, even were it to cost me my happiness, however, I had some hope that all would turn out well.

I found her in bed, and she told me she intended to stop there throughout the day. I approved, for in bed I thought her ravishing.

"We will set to work," said she; and her governess set a little table by her bed, and she gave me a piece of paper covered with questions tending to convince me that, before I married her, I should communicate to her my supposed science. All these questions were artfully conceived, all were so worded as to force the oracle to order me to satisfy her or to definitely forbid my doing so. I saw the snare and all my thoughts were how to avoid it, though I pretended to be merely considering the questions. I could not make the oracle speak to please Esther, and I could still less make it pronounce a positive prohibition, as I feared that she would resent such an answer bitterly and revenge herself on me.

Nevertheless, I had to assume an indifferent air, and I got myself out of the difficulty by equivocal answers, till the good-humoured papa came to summon me to dinner.

He allowed his daughter to stay in bed on the condition that she was to do no more work, as he was afraid that, by applying herself intently, she would increase her headache. She promised, much to my delight, that he should be obeyed; so, on my return from dinner, I found her asleep and, sitting at her bedside, I let her sleep on.

When she awoke, she said she would like to read a little; and, as if by inspiration, I chanced to take up Colardeau's *Héroïdes*, and we inflamed each other by reading the letters of Héloïse and Abélard. The ardours thus aroused passed into our talk and we began to discuss the secret which the oracle had revealed.

"But, Esther dear," said I, "did not the oracle reveal a circumstance of which you knew perfectly well before?"

"No, sweetheart, the secret was perfectly unknown to me and would have continued unknown."

"Then you have never been curious enough to inspect your own person?"

"However curious I may have been, nature placed that mole in such a position as to escape any but the most minute search."

Satiated with bliss, though I had not attained to the utmost of enjoyment, which she wisely denied me, after two hours had been devoted to those pastimes which led to nothing, I resolved to tell her the whole truth and show her how I had abused her trust in me, though I feared that her anger would be roused.

Esther, who had a large share of intelligence—indeed, if she had had less I could not have deceived her so well—listened to me without interrupting me and without any signs of anger or astonishment. At

last, when I had brought my long and sincere confession to an end, she said:

"I know your love for me is as great as mine for you; and, if I am certain that what you have just said cannot possibly be true, I am forced to conclude that, if you do not communicate to me all the secrets of your science, it is because to do so is not in your power. Let us love one another till death, and say no more about this matter."

After a moment's silence, she went on:

"If love has taken away from you the courage of sincerity, I forgive you, but I am sorry for you. You have given me too positive proof of the reality of your science to be able to shake my belief. You could never have found out a thing of which I myself was ignorant and of which no mortal man could know."

"And, if I show you, Esther dear, that I knew you had this mole, that I had good reasons for supposing you to be ignorant of it, will your belief be shaken then?"

"You knew it? How could you have seen it? It's incredible!"

"I will tell you all."

I then explained to her the theory of the correspondence of moles on the various parts of the human body and, to convince her, I ended by saying that her governess, who had a large mark on her right cheek, ought to have one very like it on her left thigh. At this she burst into laughter and said, "I will find out, but, after all you have told me, I can only admire you the more for knowing what no one else does."

"Do you really think, Esther, that I am the sole possessor of this science? Undeceive yourself. All who have studied anatomy, physiology and astrology know of it."

"Then I beg you to get me, by to-morrow—yes, to-morrow—all the books which will teach me secrets of that nature. I long to be able to astonish the ignorant with my cabala, which I see requires a mixture of knowledge and imposition. I wish to devote myself entirely to this study. We can love each other to the death, but we can do that without getting married."

I re-entered my lodging in a peaceful and happy frame of mind; an enormous weight seemed taken off my spirits. Next morning I purchased such volumes as I judged would instruct and amuse her at the same time and went to present them to her. She was most pleased with my *Conis*, as she found in it the character of truth. As she wished to shine by her answers through the oracle, it was necessary for her to have an extensive knowledge of science, and I put her on the way.

About that time I conceived the idea of making a short tour in Germany before returning to Paris, and Esther encouraged me to do so after I had promised that she should see me again before the end of the year. This promise was sincerely given; and, though from that day to this I have not beheld the face of that charming and remarkable woman, I cannot reproach myself with having deceived her wilfully, for subsequent events prevented me from keeping my word.

I wrote to M. d'Afri requesting him to procure me a passport

through the Empire, where the French and other belligerent powers were then campaigning. He answered very politely that I had no need of a passport, but that, if I wished to have one, he would send it me forthwith. I was content with this letter and put it among my papers, and at Cologne it got me a better reception than all the passports in the world.

I made M. d'O—the depositary of the various moneys I had in different banking houses, and the worthy man, who was a true friend to me, gave me a bill of exchange on a dozen of the chief houses in Germany.

When my affairs were all in order, I started in my post-chaise, with the sum of nearly a hundred thousand Dutch florins to my credit, some valuable jewels and a well stocked wardrobe. I sent my Swiss servant back to Paris, keeping only my faithful Spaniard, who on this occasion travelled with me, seated behind my chaise.

Thus ends the history of my second visit to Holland, where I did nothing to augment my fortune. I had some unpleasant experiences there, for which I had my own imprudence to thank, but after the lapse of so many years I feel that these mishaps were more than compensated by the charms of Esther's society.

I stopped only one day at Utrecht and two days later reached Cologne at noon, without accident, but not without danger, for at a distance of half a league from the town five deserters, three on the right hand and two on the left, levelled their pistols at me, with the words, "Your money or your life!" However, I covered the postillion with my own pistol, threatening to fire if he did not drive on, and the robbers discharged their weapons at the carriage, not having enough spirit to shoot the postillion.

If I had been like the English, who carry a light purse for the benefit of the highwaymen, I would have thrown it to these poor wretches; but, as it was, I risked my life rather than be robbed. My Spaniard was quite astonished not to have been struck by any of the balls which whistled past his ears.

The French were in winter quarters in Cologne and I put up at the Soleil d'Or. As I was going in, the first person I met was Comte de Lastic, Madame d'Urfé's nephew, who greeted me with the utmost politeness and offered to take me to M. de Torci, who was in command. I accepted and this gentleman was quite satisfied with the letter M. d'Afri had written me. I told him what had happened to me as I was coming into Cologne, and he congratulated me on the happy issue of the affair, but with a soldier's freedom blamed the use I had made of my courage.

"You played high," said he, "to save your money, but you might have lost a limb and nothing would have made up for that."

I answered that to make light of a danger often diminished it. We laughed at this and he said that, if I was going to make any stay in Cologne, I should probably have the pleasure of seeing the highwaymen hanged.

"I intend to go to-morrow," said I, "and, if anything could keep me at Cologne, it would certainly not be the prospect of being present at an execution, as such sights are not at all to my taste."

I had to accept M. de Lastic's invitation to dinner, and he persuaded me to go with himself and his friend, M. de Flavacour, an officer of high rank and an agreeable man, to the theatre. As I felt sure that I should be introduced to ladies and wished to make something of a figure, I spent an hour in dressing.

I found myself in a box opposite to a pretty woman, who looked at me again and again through her opera glass. That was enough to rouse my curiosity and I begged M. de Lastic to introduce me, which he did with the best grace imaginable. He first presented me to Count Kettler, lieutenant-general in the Austrian army and on the general staff of the French army—just as the French General Montacet was on the staff of the Austrian army. I was then presented to the lady whose beauty had attracted my attention the moment I entered my box. She greeted me graciously and asked me questions about Paris and Brussels, where she had been educated, without appearing to pay any attention to my replies, but gazing at my lace and jewellery.

While we were talking of indifferent matters, like new acquaintances, she suddenly but politely asked me if I intended to make a long stay in Cologne.

"I think of crossing the Rhine to-morrow," I answered, "and shall probably dine at Bonn."

This reply, which was given as indifferently as her question, appeared to vex her, and I thought her vexation a good omen. General Kettler then rose, saying, "I am sure, sir, that this lady will persuade you to delay your departure—at least, I hope so, that I may have the pleasure of having more of your company."

I bowed and he went out with Lastic, leaving me alone with this ravishing beauty. She was the burgomaster's wife and the general was nearly always with her.

"Is the count right," said she, pleasantly, "in attributing such power to me?"

"I think so, indeed," I answered, "but he may possibly be wrong in thinking you care to exercise it."

"Very good! We must catch him, then, if only as the punishment of his indiscretion. Stay."

I was so astonished at this speech that I looked quite foolish and had to collect my senses. I thought the word "indiscretion" sublime, "punishment" exquisite, and "catch" admirable, and still more the idea of catching him by means of me. I thought it would be a mistake to inquire any further and, putting on an expression of resignation and gratitude, I lowered my head and kissed her hand with a mixture of respect and sentiment, which, without exactly imparting my feelings for her, let her know that they might be softened without much difficulty.

"Then you will stay, sir! It is really very kind of you, for, if you went off to-morrow, people might say that you came here only to show

your disdain for us. To-morrow the general gives a ball and I hope you will be one of the party."

"Can I hope to dance with you all the evening?"

"I promise to dance with nobody but you till you get tired of me."

"Then we shall dance together through all the ball."

"Where did you get that pomade which perfumes the air? I smelt it as soon as you came into the box."

"It came from Florence and, if you do not like it, you shall not be troubled with it any more."

"Oh! but I do like it. I should like some of it myself."

"And I shall be only too happy if you will permit me to send you a little to-morrow."

Just then the door of the box opened and the entrance of the general prevented her from replying. I was just going when the count said, "I am sure madame has prevailed on you to stay and come to my ball and supper to-morrow?"

"She has led me to anticipate that you would do me that honour, and she promises to dance the quadrilles with me. How can one resist entreaty from such lips?"

"Quite so, and I am obliged to her for having kept you with us. I hope to see you to-morrow."

I went out of the box in love and almost happy in anticipation. The pomade was a present from Esther and it was the first time I had used it. The box contained twenty-four pots of beautiful china. The next day I put twelve into an elegant casket, which I wrapped up in oilcloth and sent to her without a note.

I spent the morning going over Cologne with a guide; I visited all the marvels of the place and laughed with all my heart to see the horse Bayard, of whom Ariosto has sung, ridden by the four sons of Aimon—Duke Amone, father of Bradamante the Invincible and Ricciardetto the Fortunate.

I dined with M. de Castries and everybody was surprised that the general had asked me himself to the ball, as his jealousy was known, while the lady was supposed to suffer his attentions only through a feeling of vanity. The dear general was well advanced in years, far from good-looking and, as his mental qualities by no means compensated for his lack of physical ones, he was by no means an object to inspire love. In spite of his jealousy, he had to appear pleased that I sat next the fair lady at supper and spent the night in dancing with her or talking to her. It was a happy night for me and I re-entered my lodging no longer thinking of leaving Cologne. In a moment of ecstasy, emboldened by the turn the conversation had taken, I had dared to tell her that, if she would meet me alone, I would stay in Cologne till the end of the carnival.

"And what would you say," she asked, "if I give my promise and do not keep it?"

"I should bemoan my lot without accusing you; I should say to myself that you had found it impossible to keep your word."

"You are very good; you must stay with us."

The day after the ball I went to pay her my first visit. She made me welcome and introduced me to her worthy husband, who, though neither young nor handsome, was extremely good-hearted. After I had been there an hour, we heard the general's carriage coming and she said to me, "If he asks you whether you are going to the Elector's ball at Bonn, say 'yes'."

The general came in and, after the usual compliments had been passed, I withdrew.

I did not know by whom the ball was to be given or when it was to take place, but, scenting pleasure from afar off, I hastened to make inquiries about it and heard that all the good families in Cologne were going. It was a masked ball and consequently open to all. I decided then that I would go; indeed, I concluded that I had had orders to that effect, and at all events my lady would be there and I might hope for a happy meeting with her. But, as I wished to keep up my incognito as much as possible, I resolved to reply to all who asked me that important business would prevent my being present.

It fell out that the general asked me this very question in the presence of the lady and, without regard to the orders I had received from her, I replied that my health would forbid my having that pleasure.

"You are very wise, sir," said the general. "All the pleasures on earth should be sacrificed when it is a question of one's health."

I think so, too, now, but I thought differently then.

On the day of the ball, towards the evening, I set out in a post-chaise, disguised so that not a soul in Cologne could have recognised me and provided with a box containing two dominos; and on my arrival at Bonn I took a room and put on one of the dominos, locking up the other in the box; and I then had myself carried to the ball in a sedan chair.

I got in easily and unperceived and recognised all the ladies of Cologne, without their masks, and my mistress sitting at a faro table, risking a ducat. I was glad to see in the banker Count Verità of Verona, whom I had known in Bavaria. He was in the Elector's service. His small bank did not contain more than five or six ducats, and the punters, men and women, were not more than twelve. I took up a position by my mistress and the banker asked me to cut. I excused myself with a gesture and my neighbour cut without being asked. I put ten ducats on a single card and lost four times running; I played at the second deal and experienced the same fate. At the third deal nobody would cut, and the general, who was standing by but not playing, agreed to do so. I fancied his cutting would be lucky and I put fifty ducats on one card. I won. I went paroli and at the second deal I broke the bank. Everybody was curious about me; I was stared at and followed, but, seizing a favourable opportunity, I made my escape.

I went to my room, took out my money, changed my costume and returned to the ball. I saw the table occupied by new gamblers and another banker, who seemed to have a good deal of gold, but, not caring

to play any more, I had not brought much money with me. I mingled in all the groups in the ballroom, and on all sides I heard expressions of curiosity about the mask who broke the first bank.

I did not care to satisfy the general curiosity, but made my way from one side of the room to the other till I found the object of my search talking to Count Verità and, as I drew near, I found out that they were talking of me. The count was saying that the Elector had been asking who had broken the bank and that General Kettler had expressed his opinion that it was a Venetian who had been in Cologne for the last week. My mistress answered that she did not think I was there, as she had heard me say that the state of my health would keep me at home.

"I know Casanova," said the count, "and, if he be in Bonn, the Elector shall hear of it and he shan't go off without my seeing him."

I saw that I might easily be discovered after the ball, but I defied the keenest eyes to penetrate beneath my present disguise. I would, no doubt, have remained unknown, but, when the quadrilles were being arranged, I took my place in one, without reflecting that I should have to take off my mask.

As soon as my mistress saw me, she told me she had been deceived, as she would have wagered that I was the masker who broke Count Verità's bank. I told her I had only just come.

At the end of the dance the count spied me out and said, "My dear fellow countryman, I am sure you are the man who broke my bank; I congratulate you."

"I should congratulate myself if I were the fortunate individual."

"I am sure it was you."

I left him laughing and, after having taken some refreshments, I continued dancing. Two hours afterwards the count saw me again and said:

"You changed your domino in such a room, in such a house. The Elector knows all about it and, as a punishment for this deceit, he has ordered me to tell you that you are not to leave Bonn to-morrow."

"Is he going to arrest me, then?"

"Why not, if you refuse his invitation to dinner to-morrow?"

"Tell His Highness that his commands shall be obeyed. Will you present me to him now?"

"He has left the ball, but wait on me to-morrow at noon." So saying, he gave me his hand and went away.

I took care to keep the appointment on the day following, but, when I was presented, I was in some confusion, as the Elector was surrounded by five or six courtiers and, never having seen him, I looked in vain for an ecclesiastic. He saw my embarrassment and hastened to put an end to it, saying in bad Venetian, "I am wearing the costume of Grand Master of the Teutonic Order to-day." In spite of his costume, I made the usual genuflexion and, when I would have kissed his hand, he would not allow it, but shook mine in an affectionate manner.

"I was in Venice," said he, "when you were under The Leads and my nephew, the Elector of Bavaria, told me that after your fortunate

escape you stayed some time in Munich; if you had come to Cologne, I should have kept you. I hope that after dinner you will be kind enough to tell us the story of your escape, that you will stay to supper and will join in a little masquerade with which we propose to amuse ourselves."

I promised to tell my tale if he thought it would not weary him, warning him that it would take two hours. "One could never have too much of a good thing," he was kind enough to say, and I made him laugh by my account of the conversation between the Duc de Choiseul and myself.

At dinner the prince spoke to me in Venetian and was pleased to be most gracious towards me. He was a man of a jovial and easy-going disposition and, with his look of health, one would not have prophesied so soon an end as came to him. He died the year following.

As soon as we rose from table, he begged me to begin my story and for two hours I had the pleasure of keeping this most brilliant company amused.

My readers know the story; its interest lies in the dramatic nature of the details, but it is impossible to communicate the fire of a well told story to an account in writing.

The Elector's little ball was very pleasant. We were all dressed as peasants and the costumes were taken from a special wardrobe of the prince's. It would have been ridiculous to choose any other dresses, as the Elector wore one of the same kind himself. General Kettler was the best disguised of us all; he looked the rustic to the life. My mistress was ravishing. We danced only quadrilles and German dances. There were only four or five ladies of the highest rank; all the others, who were more or less pretty, were favourites of the prince, all his days a great lover of the fair sex. Two of these ladies danced the forlana, and the Elector was much amused in making me dance it also. I have already said that the forlana is a Venetian dance and one of the most energetic imaginable. It is danced by a lady and gentleman opposite to one another and, as the two ladies relieved one another, they were almost the death of me. One has to be strong to dance twelve turns; after the thirteenth I felt I could do no more and begged for mercy.

Soon after we danced another dance, where each gentleman kisses a lady. I was not too shy and each time continued to kiss my mistress with considerable ardour, which made the peasant-elector burst with laughter and the peasant-general burst with rage.

In a lull between the dances this charming and original woman found means to tell me in private that all the Cologne ladies would leave at noon on the next day and that I would increase my popularity by inviting them all to breakfast at Bruhl.

"Send each one a note with the name of her cavalier and trust in Count Veritá to do everything for the best; you need only tell him that you wish to give an entertainment similar to that given two years ago by the Prince de Deux-Ponts. Lose no time. You will have a score of

guests; mind you let them know the hour of the repast. Take care, too, that your invitations are sent round by nine o'clock in the morning."

All these instructions were uttered with lightning speed, and I, enchanted with the power my mistress thought she possessed over me, thought only of obeying, without reflecting whether I owed her obedience. "Bruhl, breakfast, a score of people, like the Prince de Deux-Ponts, invitations to the ladies, Count Veritá"—I knew as much as she could have told me if she had taken an hour.

I left the room in my peasant's dress and begged a page to take me to Count Veritá, who began to laugh on seeing my attire. I told my business with the importance of an ambassador and this made him in a still better humour.

"It can all easily be arranged," said he. "I have only to write to the steward and I will do so immediately. But how much do you want to spend?"

"As much as possible."

"As little as possible, I suppose you mean."

"Not at all; I want to treat my guests with magnificence."

"All the same you must fix on a sum, as I know whom I've got to deal with."

"Well, well! Two—three hundred ducats; will that do?"

"Two hundred; the Prince de Deux-Ponts did not spend more."

He began to write and gave me his word that everything should be in readiness. I left him and, addressing myself to a sharp Italian page, said that I would give two ducats to the valet who would furnish me with the names of the Cologne ladies who were in Bonn and of the gentlemen who had accompanied them. I got what I wanted in less than half an hour and, before leaving the ball, told my mistress that all should be done according to her desires.

I wrote eighteen notes before I went to bed and in the morning a confidential servant had delivered them before nine o'clock.

At nine o'clock I went to take leave of Count Veritá, who gave me, on behalf of the Elector, a superb gold snuffbox, with his portrait set in diamonds. I was very sensible of this mark of kindness and wished to go and thank His Serene Highness before my departure, but my friendly fellow countryman told me that I might put off doing so till I passed through Bonn on my way to Frankfort.

Breakfast was ordered for one o'clock. At noon I had arrived at Bruhl, a country house of the Elector's with nothing remarkable about it save its furniture. In this it is a poor copy of the Trianon. In a fine hall I found a table laid for twenty-four persons, arranged with silver-gilt plates, damask linen and exquisite china, while the sideboard was adorned with an immense quantity of silver and silver-gilt plate. At one end of the room were two other tables, laden with sweets and the choicest wines procurable. I announced myself as the host and the cook told me I should be perfectly satisfied.

"The collation," said he, "will be composed of only twenty-four

dishes, but in addition there will be twenty-four dishes of English oysters and a splendid dessert."

I saw a great number of servants and told him that they would not be necessary, but he said they were, as the guests' servants could not be admitted.

I received all my guests at the door, confining my compliments to begging their pardons for having been so bold as to procure myself this great honour.

The breakfast was served at one exactly and I had the pleasure of enjoying the astonishment in my mistress's eyes when she saw that I had treated them as well as a prince of the empire. She was aware that everybody knew her to be the chief object of this lavish outlay, but she was delighted to see that I did not pay her any attentions which were at all invidious. The table was seated for twenty-four and, though I had asked only eighteen people, every place was occupied. Three couples, therefore, had come without being asked, but that pleased me all the more. Like a courtly cavalier, I would not sit down, but waited on the ladies, going from one to the other, eating the dainty bits they gave me and seeing that all had what they wanted.

By the time the oysters were done, twenty bottles of champagne had been emptied, so that, when the actual breakfast commenced, everybody began to talk at once. The meal might easily have passed for a splendid dinner and I was glad to see that not a drop of water was drunk, for the champagne, Tokay, Rhine wine, Madeira, Malaga, Cyprus, Alicante and Cape wine would not allow it.

Before dessert was brought on, an enormous dish of truffles was placed on the table. I advised my guests to take Maraschino with it and those ladies who appreciated the liqueur drank it as if it had been water. The dessert was really sumptuous. In it were displayed the portraits of all the monarchs of Europe. Everyone complimented the chief cook on his achievement and he, his vanity being tickled and wishing to appear good-natured, said that none of it would spoil in the pocket and accordingly everybody took as much as they chose.

General Kettler, who, in spite of his jealousy and the part he saw me play, had no suspicion of the real origin of the banquet, said:

"I will wager that this is the Elector's doing. His Highness has desired to preserve his incognito and M. Casanova has played his part to admiration."

This remark set all the company in a roar.

"General," said I, "if the Elector had given me such an order, I should, of course, have obeyed him, but I should have felt it a humiliating part to play. His Highness, however, has deigned to do me a far greater honour; look here." So saying, I showed him the gold snuffbox, which made the tour of the table two or three times over.

When we had finished, we rose from table, astonished to find we had been engaged for three hours in a pleasurable occupation, which all would willingly have prolonged; but at last we had to part, and after many compliments they all went upon their way in order to be

in time for the theatre. As well pleased as my guests, I left twenty ducats with the steward for the servants and promised him to let Count Verità know of my satisfaction in writing.

I arrived at Cologne in time for the French play and, as I had no carriage, I went to the theatre in a sedan chair. As soon as I got into the house, I saw the Comte de Lastic alone with my fair one. I thought this a good omen and went to them directly. As soon as she saw me, she said with a melancholy air that the general had got so ill that he had been obliged to go to bed. Soon after M. de Lastic left us and, dropping her assumed melancholy, she made me, with the utmost grace, a thousand compliments, which compensated me for the expenses of my breakfast a hundred times over.

"The general," said she, "had too much to drink; he is an envious devil and has discovered that it is not seemly of you to treat us as if you were a prince. I told him that, on the contrary, you had treated us as if we were princes, waiting on us with your napkin on your arm. He thereupon found fault with me for defending you."

"Why do you not send him about his business? So rude a fellow is not worthy of serving so famous a beauty."

"It's too late. A woman whom you don't know would get possession of him. I should be obliged to conceal my feelings and that would vex me."

"I understand—I understand. Would that I were a great prince! In the meantime, let me tell you that my sickness is greater than Kettler's."

"You are joking, I hope."

"Nay, not at all; I am speaking seriously, for the kisses I was so happy as to snatch from you at the ball have inflamed my blood and, if you have not enough kindness to cure me in the only possible way, I shall leave Cologne with a lifelong grief."

"Put off your departure: why should you desire to go to Stuttgart so earnestly? I think of you, believe me, and I do not wish to deceive you; but it is hard to find an opportunity."

"If you had not the general's carriage waiting for you to-night and I had mine, I could take you home with perfect propriety."

"Hush! As you have not your carriage, it is my part to take you home. It is a splendid idea, but we must so contrive it that it may not seem to be a concerted plan. You must give me your arm to my carriage and I shall then ask you where your carriage is; you will answer that you have none. I will ask you to come into mine and I will drop you at your hotel. It will give us only a couple of minutes, but that is something till we are more fortunate."

I replied to her only by a look which expressed the intoxication of my spirits at the prospect of so great bliss.

Although the play was quite a short one, it seemed to me to last forever. At last the curtain fell and we went downstairs. When we got to the portico, she asked me the question we had agreed upon and, when I told her I did not have a carriage, she said, "I am going to

the general's to ask after his health; if it will not take you too much out of your way, I can leave you at your lodging as we come back."

It was a grand idea. We could pass the entire length of the ill-paved town twice, and thus secure a little more time. Unfortunately, the carriage was a chariot and, as we were going, the moon shone directly on us. On that occasion the planet was certainly not entitled to the appellation of "the lover's friend." We did all we could, but that was almost nothing and I found the attempt a desperate one, though my lovely partner endeavoured to help me as much as possible. To add to our discomforts, the inquisitive and impudent coachman kept turning his head round, which forced us to moderate the energy of our movements. The sentry at the general's door told our coachman that His Excellency could see no one, and we joyfully turned toward my hotel, and, now that the moon was behind us and the man's curiosity less inconvenient, we got on a little better, or rather not so badly as before, but the horses seemed to me to fly rather than gallop; however, feeling that it would be well to have the coachman on my side in case of another opportunity, I gave him a ducat as I got down.

I entered the hotel feeling vexed and unhappy, though more in love than ever, for my fair one had convinced me that she was no passive mistress, but could experience pleasure as well as give it. That being the case, I resolved not to leave Cologne before we had drained the cup of pleasure together, and that, it seemed to me, could not take place till the general was out of the way.

Next day, at noon, I went to the general's house to write down my name, but I found he was receiving visitors and I went in. I made the general an appropriate compliment, to which the rude Austrian replied only by a cold inclination of the head. He was surrounded by a good many officers and after four minutes I made a general bow and went out. The boor kept his room for three days and, as my mistress did not come to the theatre, I had not the pleasure of seeing her.

On the last day of the carnival Kettler asked a good many people to a ball and supper. On my going to pay my court to my mistress in her box at the theatre and being left for a moment alone with her, she asked if I were invited to the general's supper. I answered in the negative.

"What!" said she, in an imperious and indignant voice, "he has not asked you? You must go, for all that."

"Consider what you say," said I, gently. "I will do anything to please you but that."

"I know all you can urge; nevertheless, you must go. I should feel insulted if you were not at the supper. If you love me, you will give me this proof of your affection and, I think I may say, esteem."

"You ask me thus? Then I will go. But are you aware that you are exposing me to the danger of losing my life or taking his? For I am not the man to pass over an affront."

"I know all you can say," said she. "I have your honour at heart as much as mine, or perhaps more so, but nothing will happen to you;

I will answer for everything. You must go and you must give me your promise now, for I am resolved, if you do not go, neither will I, but we must never see each other more."

"Then you may reckon upon me."

At that moment M. de Castries came in and I left the box and went to the pit, where I passed two anxious hours in reflecting on the possible consequences of the strange step this woman would have me take. Nevertheless, such was the sway of her beauty over my soul, I determined to abide by my promise and carry the matter through and put myself in the wrong as little as possible. I went to the general's at the end of the play and found only five or six people there. I went up to a canoness who was very fond of Italian poetry and had no trouble in engaging her in an interesting discussion. In half an hour the room was full, my mistress coming in last on the general's arm. I was taken up with the canoness and did not stir, and consequently Kettler did not notice me, while the lady, in great delight at seeing me, left him no time to examine his guests, and he was soon talking to some people at the other end of the room. A quarter of an hour afterwards supper was announced. The canoness rose, took my arm and we seated ourselves at table together, still talking about Italian literature. Then came the catastrophe. When all the places had been taken, one gentleman was left standing, there being no place for him. "How can that have happened?" said the general, raising his voice, and, while the servants were bringing another chair and arranging another place, he passed the guests in review. All the while I pretended not to notice what was going on, but, when he came to me, he said loudly, "Sir, I did not ask you to come."

"That is quite true, general," I said respectfully, "but I thought, no doubt correctly, that the omission was due to forgetfulness, and I thought myself obliged all the same to come and pay my court to Your Excellency."

Without a pause I renewed my conversation with the canoness, not so much as looking round. A dreadful silence reigned for four or five minutes, but the canoness began to utter witticisms which I took up and communicated to my neighbours, so that in a short time the whole table was in good spirits except the general, who preserved a sulky silence. This did not much matter to me, but my vanity was concerned in smoothing him down, and I watched for my opportunity.

On M. de Castries praising the Dauphiness, her brothers, the Comte de Lusace and the Duc de Courlande, were mentioned; this led the conversation up to Prince Biron, formerly a duke, who was in Siberia, and his personal qualities were discussed, one of the guests having said that his chiefest merit was to have pleased the Empress Anne. I begged his pardon, saying:

"His greatest merit was to have served faithfully the last Duke Kettler, who, if it had not been for the courage of him who is now so unfortunate, would have lost all his belongings in the war. It was Duke Kettler who so heroically sent him to the Court of St. Petersburg, but

Biron never asked for the duchy. An earldom would have satisfied him, as he recognised the rights of the younger branch of the Kettler family, which would be reigning now if it had not been for the Empress's whim: nothing would satisfy her but to confer a dukedom on the favourite."

The general, whose face had cleared while I was speaking, said in the most polite manner of which he was capable that I was a person of remarkable information, adding regretfully, "Yes, if it had not been for that whim, I should be reigning now."

After this modest remark he burst into a fit of laughter and sent me down a bottle of the best Rhine wine and addressed his conversation to me till the supper was over. I quietly enjoyed the turn things had taken, but still more the pleasure I saw expressed in the beautiful eyes of my mistress.

Dancing went on all night and I did not leave my canoness, who was a delightful woman and danced admirably. With my lady I danced only one minuet. Towards the end of the ball the general, to finish up with a piece of awkwardness, asked me if I was going soon. I replied that I did not think of leaving Cologne till after the grand review.

I went to bed full of joy at having given the burgomaster's wife such a signal proof of my love and full of gratitude to Fortune, who had helped me so in dealing with my doltish general, for God knows what I should have done if he had forgotten himself so far as to tell me to leave the table! The next time I saw the fair one, she told me she had felt a mortal pang of fear shoot through her when the general said he had not asked me.

"I am quite sure," said she, "that he would have gone further if your grand answer had not stopped his mouth; but, if he had said another word, my mind was made up."

"To do what?"

"I should have risen from the table and taken your arm and we should have gone out together. M. de Castries has told me that he would have done the same, and I believe all the ladies whom you asked to breakfast would have followed our example."

"But the affair would not have stopped there, for I should certainly have demanded immediate satisfaction and, if he had refused it, I should have struck him with the flat of my sword."

"I know that, but pray forget that it was I who exposed you to this danger. For my part, I shall never forget what I owe to you and I will try to convince you of my gratitude."

Two days later, on hearing that she was indisposed, I went to call on her at eleven o'clock, at which time I was sure the general would not be there. She received me in her husband's room and he, in the friendliest manner possible, asked me if I had come to dine with them. I hastened to thank him for his invitation, which I accepted with pleasure, and I enjoyed this dinner better than Kettler's supper. The burgomaster was a fine-looking man, pleasant-mannered and intelligent and a lover of peace and quietness. His wife, whom he adored, ought to have loved

him, since he was by no means one of those husbands whose motto is, "Displease whom you like, so long as you please me."

On her husband's going out for a short time, she showed me over the house.

"Here is our bedroom," said she, "and this is the closet in which I sleep for five or six nights in every month. Here is a church which we may look upon as our private chapel, as we hear mass from those two grated windows. On Sundays we go down this stair and enter the church by a door, the key to which is always in my keeping."

It was the second Saturday in Lent; we had an excellent fasting dinner, but I for once did not pay much attention to eating. To see this young and beautiful woman surrounded by her children, adored by her family, seemed to me a delightful sight. I left them at an early hour to write to Esther, whom I did not neglect, all occupied as I was with this new flame.

Next day I went to hear mass at the little church next to the burgo-master's house. I was well cloaked, so as not to attract attention. I saw my fair one going out wearing a capuchin and followed by her family. I noted the little door, which was so recessed in the wall that it would have escaped the notice of anyone who was unaware of its existence; it opened, I saw, towards the staircase.

The Devil, who, as everybody knows, has more power in a church than anywhere else, put into my head the idea of enjoying my mistress by means of the door and stair. I told her my plan the next day at the theatre.

"I have thought of it as well as you," said she, laughing, "and I will give you the necessary instructions in writing; you will find them in the first gazette I send you."

We could not continue this pleasant interview, as my mistress had with her a lady from Aix-la-Chapelle, who was staying with her for a few days. And indeed the box was full of company.

I had not long to wait, for next day she gave me back the gazette openly, telling me that she had not found anything to interest her in it. I knew that it would be exceedingly interesting to me. Her note was as follows:

"The design which love inspired is subject not to difficulty but to uncertainty. The wife sleeps in the closet only when her husband asks her—an event which occurs only at certain periods, and the separation does not last for more than a few days. This period is not far off, but long custom has made it impossible for the wife to impose on her husband. It will, therefore, be necessary to wait. Love will warn you when the hour of bliss has come. The plan will be to hide in the church; and there must be no thought of seducing the doorkeeper, for, though poor, he is too stupid to be bribed and would betray the secret. The only way will be to hide so as to elude his watchfulness. He shuts the church at noon on working days; on feast days he shuts it at evening, and he always opens it again at dawn. When the time comes, all that need be done is to give the door a gentle push—it will not be locked. As the

closet which is to be the scene of the blissful combat is separated from the room only by a partition, there must be no spitting, coughing or nose-blowing; it would be fatal. The escape will be a matter of no difficulty; one can go down to the church and go out as soon as it is opened. Since the beadle saw nobody in the evening, it is not likely that he will see more in the morning."

I kissed again and again this charming letter, which I thought showed great power of mental combination, and I went next day to see how the coast lay; this was the first thing to be done. There was a chair in the church in which I should never have been seen, but the chair was on the sacristy side and that was always locked up. I decided on occupying the confessional, which was close to the door. I could creep into the space beneath the confessor's seat, but it was so small that I doubted my ability to stay there after the door was shut. I waited till noon to make the attempt and, as soon as the church was empty, I took up my position. I had to roll myself up into a ball and even then I was so badly concealed by the folding door that anyone happening to pass by at two paces distance might easily have seen me. However, I did not care for that, for in adventures of that nature one must leave a great deal to Fortune. Determined to run all risks, I went home highly pleased with my observations. I put everything I had determined down in writing and sent it to her box at the theatre, enclosed in an old gazette.

A week later she asked the general, in my presence, if her husband could do anything for him at Aix-la-Chapelle, where he was going on the morrow, with the intention of returning in three days. That was enough for me, but a glance from her added meaning to her words. I was all the more glad as I had a slight cold and, the next day being a fast day, I could take up my position at nightfall and thus avoid a painful vigil of several hours' duration.

I curled myself in the confessional at four o'clock, hiding myself as best I could and commending myself to the care of all the saints. At five o'clock the beadle made his usual tour of inspection, went out and locked the door. As soon as I heard the noise of the key, I came out of my narrow cell and sat down on a bench facing the windows. Soon after my mistress's shadow appeared on the grated panes and I knew she had seen me.

I sat on the bench for a quarter of an hour and then pushed open the little door and entered. I shut it and sat down on the lowest step of the stair and spent there five hours which would probably have not been unpleasant ones if I had not been dreadfully tormented by the rats running to and fro close to me. Nature has given me a great dislike to this animal, which is comparatively harmless, but the smell of rats always sickens me.

At last I heard the clock strike ten, the hour of bliss, and I saw the form of my beloved holding a candle and I was then freed from my painful position. If my readers have been in such a situation, they can imagine the pleasures of that happy night, but they cannot divine the minute circumstances; for, if I was an expert, my partner had an inex-

haustible store of contrivances for augmenting the bliss of that sweet employment. She had taken care to get me a little collation, which looked delicious but which I could not touch, my appetite lying in another quarter.

Exhausted, but not satiated with pleasure, I left her at daybreak, assuring her that, when we met again, she would find me the same; and with that I went to hide in the confessional, fearing lest the growing light might betray me to the beadle. However, I got away without any difficulty and passed nearly the whole day in bed, having my dinner served to me in my room. In the evening I went to the theatre to have the pleasure of seeing the beloved object of whom my love and constancy had made me the possessor.

At the end of a fortnight she sent me a note in which she told me that she would sleep by herself on the night following. It was a festal day and I therefore went to the church at eleven in the morning, after making an enormous breakfast. I hid myself as before and the beadle locked me in without making any discovery.

I had a wait of ten hours and the reflection that I should have to spend the time partly in the church and partly on the dark and rat-haunted staircase, without being able to take a pinch of snuff for fear of being obliged to blow my nose, did not tend to enliven the prospect; however, the hope of the great reward made it easy to be borne. But at one o'clock I heard a slight noise and, looking up, saw a hand appear through the grated window and a paper drop on the floor of the church. I ran to pick it up, while my heart beat fast, for my first idea was that some obstacle had occurred which would compel me to pass the night on a bench in the church. I opened it and what was my joy to read as follows:

"The door is open and you will be more comfortable on the staircase, where you will find a light, a little dinner and some books, than in the church. The seat is not very easy, but I have done my best to remedy the discomfort with a cushion. Trust me, the time will seem as long to me as to you, but be patient. I have told the general that I do not feel very well and shall not go out to-day. May God keep you from coughing, especially during the night, for on the least noise we should be undone."

What stratagems are inspired by love! I opened the door directly and found a nicely laid meal, dainty viands, delicious wine, coffee, a chafing dish, lemons, spirits of wine, sugar and rum to make some punch if I liked. With these comforts and some books, I could wait well enough, but I was astonished at the dexterity of my charming mistress in doing all this without the knowledge of anybody in the house.

I spent three hours in reading and three more in eating and making coffee and punch, and then I went to sleep. At ten o'clock my darling came and woke me. This second night was delicious, but not so much as the former, as we could not see each other and the violence of our ecstatic combats was restrained by the vicinity of the good husband. We

slept part of the time, and early in the morning I had to make good my retreat.

Thus ended my amour with this lady. The general went to Westphalia and she was soon to go into the country. I thus made my preparations for leaving Cologne, promising to come and see her the year following, which promise however I was precluded, as the reader will see, from keeping. I took leave of my acquaintances and set out, regretted by all.

The stay of two months and a half which I made in Cologne did not diminish my monetary resources, although I lost whenever I was persuaded to play. However, my winning in Bonn made up all deficiencies, and my banker, M. Franck, complained that I had not made any use of him. However, I was obliged to be prudent, so that those persons who spied into my actions might find nothing reprehensible.

I left Cologne about the middle of March and stopped at Bonn to present my respects to the Elector, but he was away. I dined with Count Verità and the Abbé Scampar, a favourite of the Elector's. After dinner the count gave me a letter of introduction to a canoness at Coblenz, of whom he spoke in very high terms. That obliged me to stop at Coblenz; but, when I got down at the inn, I found that the canoness was at Mannheim, while in her stead I encountered an actress named Toscani, who was going to Stuttgart with her young and pretty daughter. She was on her way from Paris, where her daughter had been learning character-dancing with the famous Vestris. I had known her in Paris, but had not seen much of her, though I had given her a little spaniel dog, which was the joy of her daughter. This daughter was a perfect jewel, who had very little difficulty in persuading me to come with them to Stuttgart, where I expected, for other reasons, to have a very pleasant stay. The mother was impatient to know what the duke would think of her daughter, for she had destined her from her childhood to serve the pleasures of this voluptuous prince, who, though he had a titular mistress, was fond of experimenting with all the ballet girls who took his fancy.

We made up a little supper party and it may be guessed that, two of us belonging to the boards, the conversation was not exactly a course in moral theology. La Toscani told me that her daughter was a neophyte and that she had made up her mind not to let the duke touch her till he had dismissed his reigning mistress, whose place she was designed to take. The mistress in question was a dancer named Gardella, daughter of a Venetian boatman, whose name has been mentioned in the first part of these *Memoirs*—in fine, she was the wife of Michel Agata, whom I had found in Munich fleeing from the terrible Leads, where I myself languished for so long.

As I seemed to doubt the mother's assertion and threw out some rather broad hints to the effect that I believed that the first bloom had been plucked in Paris, and that the Duke of Wurtemberg would have only the second, their vanity was touched, and, on my proposing to verify the matter with my own eyes, it was solemnly agreed that this

ceremony should take place the next day. They kept their promise, and I was pleasantly engaged for two hours the next morning.

I resolved then to go to Stuttgart in company with the two nymphs and expected to see there *la Binetti*, who was always an enthusiastic admirer of mine. This actress was the daughter of a Roman boatman. I had helped her to get on the boards the same year that *Madame de Valmarana* had married her to a French dancer named *Binet*, whose name she had Italianized by the addition of one syllable, like those who ennoble themselves by adding another syllable to their names. I also expected to see *la Gardella*, young *Baletti*, of whom I was very fond, his young wife, *la Vulcani*, and several other of my old friends, who I thought would combine to make my stay in Stuttgart a very pleasant one. But it will be seen that it is a risky thing to reckon without one's host. At the last posting-station I bade adieu to my two friends and went to put up at the Bear.

CHAPTER 67

At that period the court of the Duke of Wurtemberg was the most brilliant in Europe. The heavy subsidies paid by France for quartering ten thousand men upon him furnished him with the means for indulging in luxury and debauchery. The army in question was a fine body of men, but during the war it was distinguished only by its blunders.

The duke was sumptuous in his tastes, which were for splendid palaces, hunting establishments on a large scale, enormous stables—in short, every whim imaginable; but his chief expense was the large salaries he paid his theatre and, above all, his mistresses. He had a French play, an Italian opera, grand and comic, and twenty Italian dancers, all of whom had been principal dancers in Italian theatres. His director of ballets was *Novers* and sometimes five hundred dancers appeared at once. A clever machinist and the best scene painters did their best to make the audience believe in magic. All the ballet girls were pretty and all of them boasted of having been enjoyed at least once by my lord. The chief of them was a Venetian, daughter of a gondolier named *Gardella*. She was brought up by the senator *Mali-piero* (whom my readers know for his good offices towards myself), who had her taught for the theatre and gave her a dancing-master. I had found her in Munich after my flight from *The Leads*, married to *Michel Agata*. The duke took a fancy to her and asked her husband, who was only too happy to agree, to yield her; but he was satisfied with her charms in a year and put her on the retired list with the title of *Madame*.

This honour had made all the other ballet girls jealous and they all thought themselves as fit as she to be taken to be the duke's titular mistress, especially as she enjoyed only the honour without the pleas-

are. They all intrigued to procure her dismissal, but the Venetian lady succeeded in holding her ground against all cabals.

Far from reproaching the duke for his incorrigible infidelity, she encouraged him in it and was very glad to be left to herself, as she cared nothing for him. Her chief pleasure was to have the ballet girls who aspired to the honours of the handkerchief come to her to solicit her good offices. She always received them politely, gave them her advice and bade them do their best to please the prince. In his turn the duke thought himself bound to show his gratitude for her good nature and gave her in public all the honours which could be given to a princess.

I was not long in finding out that the duke's chief desire was to be talked about. He would have liked people to say that there was not a prince in Europe to compare with him for wit, taste, genius, in the invention of pleasures, and statesmanlike capacities; he would fain be regarded as a Hercules in the pleasures of Bacchus and Venus, and none the less an Aristides in governing his people. He dismissed without pity an attendant who failed to wake him after he had been forced to yield to sleep for three or four hours, but he did not care how roughly he was awakened.

It has happened that after having given His Highness a large cup of coffee, the servant has been obliged to throw him into a bath of cold water, where the duke had to choose between awaking or drowning.

As soon as he was dressed, the duke would assemble his council and dispatch whatever business was on hand and then he would give audience to whoever cared to come into his presence. Nothing could be more comic than the audiences he gave to his poorer subjects. Often there came to him dull peasants and workmen of the lowest class; the poor duke would sweat and rage to make them listen to reason, in which he was sometimes unsuccessful and his petitioners would go away terrified, desperate and furious. As to the pretty country maidens, he examined into their complaints in private and, though he seldom did anything for them, they went away consoled.

The subsidies which the French Crown was foolish enough to pay him for a perfectly useless service did not suffice for his extravagant expenses. He loaded his subjects with taxes till the patient people could bear it no longer and some years after had recourse to the Diet of Wetzlar, which obliged him to change his system. He was foolish enough to wish to imitate the King of Prussia, while that monarch made fun of the duke and called him his "ape." His wife was the daughter of the Margrave of Bayreuth, the prettiest and most accomplished princess in all Germany. When I arrived at Stuttgart, she was no longer there; she had taken refuge with her father, on account of a disgraceful affront which had been offered her by her unworthy husband. It is incorrect to say that this princess fled from her husband because of his infidelities.

After I had dined by myself, I dressed and went to the opera

provided gratis by the duke in the fine theatre he had built. The prince was in the front of the orchestra, surrounded by his brilliant court. I sat in a box on the first tier, delighted to be able to hear so well the music of the famous Jumella, who was in the duke's service. In my ignorance of the etiquette of small German courts, I happened to applaud a solo which had been exquisitely sung by a *castrato* whose name I have forgotten, and directly afterwards an individual came into my box and addressed me in a rude manner. However, I knew no German and could only answer by "*Nicht verstand*" (I don't understand).

He went out and soon after an official came in, who told me in good French that, when the sovereign was present, all applause was forbidden.

"Very good, sir. Then I will go away and come again when the sovereign is not here, as, when an air pleases me, I always applaud."

After this reply I called for my carriage, but, just as I was getting into it, the same official came and told me that the duke wanted to speak to me. I accordingly followed him to the presence.

"You are M. Casanova, are you?" said the duke.

"Yes, my lord."

"Where do you come from?"

"From Cologne."

"Is this the first time you have been in Stuttgart?"

"Yes, my lord."

"Do you think of staying long?"

"For five or six days, if Your Highness will allow me."

"Certainly, you may stay as long as you like and you may clap when you please."

"I shall profit by your permission, my lord."

"Good."

I sat down again and the whole audience settled down to the play. Soon after, an actor sang an air which the duke applauded and, of course, all the courtiers, but, not caring much for the song, I sat still—everyone to his taste. After the ballet the duke went to the favourite's box, kissed her hand and left the theatre. An official who was sitting by me and did not know that I was acquainted with la Gardella told me that, as I had had the honour of speaking to the prince, I might obtain the honour of kissing his favourite's hand.

I felt a strong inclination to laugh but restrained myself, and a sudden and very irrational impulse made me say that she was a relative of mine. The words had no sooner escaped me than I bit my lip, for this stupid lie could only do me harm, but it was decreed that I should do nothing in Stuttgart but commit blunders. The officer, who seemed astonished at my reply, bowed and went to the favourite's box to inform her of my presence. La Gardella looked in my direction and beckoned to me with her fan, and I hastened to comply with the invitation, laughing inwardly at the part I was going to play.

As soon as I came in, she graciously gave me her hand, which I kissed, calling her my cousin.

"Did you tell the duke you were my cousin?" said she.

"No," I replied.

"Very good, then I will do so myself; come and dine with me to-morrow."

She then left the house, and I went to visit the ballet girls, who were undressing. La Binetti, who was one of the oldest of my acquaintances, was in an ecstasy of joy at seeing me and asked me to dine with her every day. Curtz, the violinist, who had been with me in the orchestra at St. Samuel's, introduced me to his pretty daughter, saying, "She is not made for the duke's eye to gaze on, and he shall never have her."

The good man was no prophet, as the duke got possession of her a short time after. She presented him with two babies, but these pledges of affection could not fix the inconstant prince. Nevertheless, she was a girl of the most captivating kind, for to the most perfect beauty she added grace, wit, goodness and kindness, which won every one's heart. But the duke was satiated and his only pleasure lay in novelty.

After her I saw La Vulcani, whom I had known at Dresden and who surprised me by introducing her husband to me. He threw his arms round my neck. He was Baletti, brother of my faithless one, a young man of great talent, of whom I was very fond.

I was surrounded by all these friends when the officer to whom I had so foolishly told that I was related to la Gardella came in and began to tell the story. La Binetti, after hearing it, said to him, "It's a lie."

"But my dear," said I to her, "you can't be better informed on the subject than I am." She replied by laughing, but Curtz said, very wittily, "As Gardella is only a boatman's daughter, like Binetti, the latter thinks, and very rightly, that you ought to have given her the refusal of your cousinship."

Next day I had a pleasant dinner with the favourite, though she told me that, not having seen the duke, she could not tell me how he would take my pleasantry, which her mother resented very much. This mother of hers, a woman of the lowest birth, had become very proud since her daughter was a prince's mistress, and thought my relationship a blot on their escutcheon. She had the impudence to tell me that her relatives had never been players, without reflecting that it must be worse to descend to this estate than to rise from it, if it were dishonourable. I ought to have pitied her, but, not being of a forbearing nature, I retorted by asking if her sister was still alive, a question which made her frown and to which she gave no answer. The sister I spoke of was a fat, blind woman, who begged on a bridge in Venice.

After having spent a pleasant day with the favourite, who was the oldest of my theatrical friends, I left her, promising to come to breakfast the next day; but, as I was going out, the porter bade me not

to put my foot there again, but would not say on whose authority he gave me this polite order. It would have been wiser to hold my tongue, as this stroke must have come from the mother, or, perhaps, from the daughter, whose vanity I had wounded. She was a good enough actress to conceal her anger.

I was angry with myself and went away in an ill humour; I was humiliated to see myself treated in such a manner by a wretched wanton of an actress; though, if I had been more discreet, I could have got a welcome in the best society. If I had not promised to dine with Binetti the next day, I should have posted off forthwith and I should thus have escaped all the misadventures which befell me in that wretched town.

La Binetti lived in the house of her lover, the Austrian ambassador, and the part of the house she occupied adjoined the town wall. As will be seen, this detail is an important one. I dined alone with my good fellow countrywoman, and, if I had felt myself capable of love at that period, all my old affection would have resumed its sway over me, as her beauty was undiminished and she had more tact and knowledge of the world than when I had known her before.

The Austrian ambassador was a good-natured, easy-going and generous man; as for her husband, he was not worthy of her and she never saw him. I spent a pleasant day with her, talking of our old friends, and, as I had nothing to keep me in Wurtemberg, I decided to leave in two days, as I had promised la Toscani and her daughter to go with them on the next day to Louisburg. We were to start at five in the morning, but the following adventure befell me:

As I was leaving Binetti's house, I was greeted very courteously by three officers whom I had become acquainted with at the coffee-house, and I walked along the promenade with them.

"We are going," said one of them, "to visit certain ladies of easy virtue; we shall be glad to have you of our company."

"I speak only a few words of German," I answered, "and, if I join you, I shall be bored."

"Ah! but the ladies are Italians," they exclaimed. "Nothing could suit you better."

I did not at all like following them, but my evil genius led me in that wretched town from one blunder to another, and so I went in spite of myself.

We turned back into the town and I let myself be led up to the third floor of an ill-looking house, and in the meanest of rooms I saw the pretended nieces of Peccini. A moment after Peccini appeared and had the impudence to throw his arms around my neck, calling me his best friend. His nieces overwhelmed me with caresses and seemed to confirm the idea that we were old friends. I did nothing and held my tongue.

The officers prepared for a debauch; I did not imitate their example, but this made no difference to them. I saw into what an evil place I had been decoyed, but a false shame prevented me from leaving the

house without ceremony. I was wrong, but I determined to be more prudent in future.

Before long a pot-house supper was served, of which I did not partake; but, not wishing to seem bad company, I drank two or three small glasses of Hungarian wine. After supper, which did not last very long, cards were produced and one of the officers held a bank at faro. I punted and lost the fifty or sixty louis I had about me. I felt that I was drunk, my head was reeling and I would have gladly given over playing and gone away, but I have never been so possessed as on that day, either from false shame or from the effects of the drugged wine they gave me. My noble officers seemed vexed that I had lost, and would give me my revenge. They made me hold a bank of a hundred louis in fish, which they counted out to me. I did so and lost. I made a bank again and again I lost. My inflamed understanding, my increasing drunkenness and my anger deprived me of all sense and I kept increasing my bank, losing all the time, till at midnight my good rascals declared they would play no more. They made a calculation, and declared that I had lost nearly a hundred thousand francs. So great was my intoxication, although I had had no more wine, that they were obliged to send for a sedan chair to take me to my inn. While my servant was undressing me, he discovered that I had neither my watches nor my gold snuffbox.

"Don't forget to wake me at four in the morning," said I. Therewith I went to bed and enjoyed a calm and refreshing sleep.

While I was dressing next morning, I found a hundred louis in my pocket, at which I was much astonished, for, my dizziness of brain being over now, I remembered that I had not this money about me the evening before; but my mind was taken up with the pleasure party, and I put off thinking of this incident and of my enormous losses till afterwards. I went to la Toscani and we set out for Louis-burg, where we had a capital dinner and my spirits ran so high that my companions could never have guessed the misfortune that had just befallen me. We went back to Stuttgart in the evening.

When I got home, my Spaniard told me that they knew nothing about my watches and snuffbox at the house where I had been the evening before, and that the three officers had come to call on me, but, not finding me at home, they had told him to warn me that they would breakfast with me on the following morning. They kept the appointment.

"Gentlemen," said I, as soon as they came in, "I have lost a sum which I cannot pay and which I certainly should not have lost without the drugged wine you gave me. You have taken me to a den of infamy, where I was shamefully robbed of jewellery to the value of more than three hundred louis. I complain of no one, since I have only my own folly to complain of. If I had been wiser, all this would not have happened to me."

They exclaimed loudly at this speech and tried to play the part of

men of honour. They spoke in vain, as I had made up my mind to pay nothing.

Whilst we were in the thick of the fight and were beginning to get angry over it, Baletti, Toscani and Binetti came in and heard the discussion. I then had breakfast brought in and, after we had finished, my friends left me.

When we were once more alone, one of the rascals addressed me as follows:

"We are too honest, sir, to take advantage of your position. You have been unfortunate, but all men are sometimes unfortunate and we ask nothing better than a mutual accommodation. We will take over all your properties, jewels, diamonds, arms and carriage, and have them valued; and, if the sum realised does not cover your debt, we will take your acceptance, payable at date, and remain good friends."

"Sir, I do not wish for the friendship of robbers, and I will not pay a single farthing."

At this they tried threats, but I kept cool and said, "Gentlemen, your menaces will not intimidate me, and, as far as I can see, you have only two ways of getting paid: either by way of the law, in which case I do not think I shall find it difficult to get a barrister to take up my case, or, secondly, you can pay yourselves on my body, honourably, with sword in hand."

As I had expected, they replied that, if I wished, they would do me the honour of killing me after I had paid them. They went off cursing, telling me that I would be sorry for what I had said.

Soon after I went out and spent the day with la Toscani in gaiety which, situated as I was, was not far from madness. At the time I placed it to the account of the daughter's charms and to the need my spirits were in of recovering their elasticity.

However, the mother, having witnessed the rage of the three robbers, was the first to urge me to fortify myself against their villainy by an appeal to the law.

"If you give them the start," said she, "they may possibly gain a great advantage over you, in spite of the right being on your side."

And, whilst I toyed with her charming daughter, she sent for a barrister. After hearing my case, the counsel told me that my best way would be to tell the whole story to the sovereign as soon as possible.

"They took you to the house of ill-fame; they poured out the drugged wine which deprived you of your reason; they made you play in spite of their prince's prohibition (for gaming is strictly forbidden); in this company you were robbed of your jewels after they had made you lose an enormous sum. It's a hanging matter, and the duke's interest will be to do you justice, for an act of scoundrelism like this committed by his officers would dishonour him all over Europe."

I felt some repugnance to this course, for, though the duke was

a shameless libertine, I did not like telling him such a disgraceful story. However, the case was a serious one and, after giving it due reflection, I determined to wait on the duke on the following morning.

"As the duke gives audience to the first-comer," I said to myself, "why should I not have as good a reception as a labouring man?" In this way I concluded that it would be no use to write to him, and I was on my way to the Court when, at about twenty paces from the gate of the castle, I met my three gentlemen, who accosted me rudely and said I had better make up my mind to pay or else they would play the devil with me.

I was going on without paying any attention to them when I felt myself rudely seized by the right arm. A natural impulse of self-defence made me put my hand to my sword and I drew it in a manner that showed I was in earnest. The officer of the guard came running up and I complained that the three were assaulting me and endeavouring to hinder my approach to the prince. On inquiry being made, the sentry and the numerous persons who were present declared that I had drawn only in self-defence, so the officer decided that I had perfect liberty to enter the castle.

I was allowed to penetrate to the last ante-chamber without any obstacle being raised. Here I addressed myself to the chamberlain, demanding an audience with the sovereign, and he assured me that I should be introduced into the presence. But directly afterwards the impudent scoundrel who had taken hold of my arm came up and began to speak to the chamberlain in German. He said his say without my being able to contradict him, and his representations were doubtless not in my favour. Very possibly, too, the chamberlain was one of the gang, and I was going from Herod to Pilate. An hour went by without my being able to see the prince, and then the chamberlain, who had assured me that I should have audience, came and told me that I might go home, as the duke had heard all the circumstances of the case and would no doubt see that justice was done me.

I saw at once that I should get no justice at all, and, as I was walking away, I thought how best I could get out of the difficulty. On my way I met Binetti, who knew how I was placed, and he asked me to come and dine with him, assuring me that the Austrian ambassador would take me under his protection and that he would save me from the violent measures which the rascals no doubt intended to take, in spite of the chamberlain's assurances. I accepted the invitation, and Binetti's charming wife, taking the affair to heart, did not lose a moment in informing her lover, the ambassador, of all the circumstances.

This diplomatist came into the room with her and, after hearing all the details from my lips, said that, in all probability, the duke knew nothing about it.

"Write a brief account of the business," said he, "and I will lay it before the sovereign, who will no doubt see justice done."

I went to Binetti's desk and, as soon as I had written down my true

relation, I gave it, unsealed, to the ambassador, who assured me that it should be in the duke's hands in the course of an hour.

At dinner my countrywoman assured me again that her lover would protect me, and we spent the day pleasantly enough; but towards evening my Spaniard came and assured me that, if I returned to the inn, I would be arrested, "for," said he, "an officer came to see you and, finding you were out, he took up his position at the street door and has two soldiers standing at the foot of the staircase."

La Binetti said: "You must not go to the inn; stay here, where you have nothing to fear. Send for what you want and we will wait and see what happens." I then gave orders to my Spaniard to go and fetch the belongings which were absolutely necessary to me.

At midnight the ambassador came in; we were still up and he seemed pleased that his mistress had sheltered me. He assured me that my plea had been laid before the sovereign, but during the three days I was in the house I heard no more about it.

On the fourth day, whilst I was pondering as to how I should act, the ambassador received a letter from a minister requesting him, on behalf of the sovereign, to dismiss me from his house, as I had a suit pending with certain officers of His Highness and, whilst I was with the ambassador, justice could not take its course. The ambassador gave me the letter and I saw that the minister promised that strict justice should be done me. There was no help for it; I had to make up my mind to return to my inn, but the Binetti was so enraged that she began to scold her lover, at which he laughed, saying, with perfect truth, that he could not keep me there in defiance of the prince.

I re-entered the inn without meeting anyone, but, when I had had my dinner and was just going to see my counsel, an officer served me with a summons, which was interpreted to me by my landlord, ordering me to appear forthwith before the notary appointed to take my deposition. I went to him with the officer of the court and spent two hours with the notary, who wrote down my deposition in German while I gave it in Latin. When it was done, he told me to sign my name, to which I answered that I must decline to sign a document I did not understand. He insisted on my doing it, but I was immovable. He then got in a rage and said I ought to be ashamed of myself for suspecting a notary's honour. I replied calmly that I had no doubts as to his honour, but that I acted from principle and that, as I did not understand what he had written, I refused to sign it. I left him and was accompanied by the officer to my own counsel, who said I had done quite right, and promised to call on me the next day to receive my power of attorney.

"And, when I have done that," he said, "your business will be mine."

I was comforted by this man, who inspired me with confidence, and went back to the hotel, where I made a good supper and went tranquilly to sleep. Next morning, however, when I awoke, my Spaniard announced an officer, who followed him and told me in good

French that I must not be astonished to find myself a prisoner in my room, for, being a stranger and engaged in a suit at law, it was only right that the opposite party should be assured that I would not escape before judgment was given. He asked very politely for my sword and, to my great regret, I was compelled to give it to him. The hilt was of steel, exquisitely chased; it was a present from Madame d'Urfé and was worth at least fifty louis.

I wrote a note to my counsel to tell him what had happened; he came to see me and assured me that I should be under arrest for only a few days.

As I was obliged to keep my room, I let my friends know of my confinement and received visits from dancers and ballet girls, who were the only decent people I was acquainted with in that wretched Stuttgart, where I had better never have set foot. My situation was not pleasant to contemplate: I had been drugged, cheated, robbed, abused, imprisoned, threatened with a mulct of a hundred thousand francs, which would have stripped me to my shirt, as nobody knew the contents of my pocketbook. I could think of nothing else. I had written to Madame la Gardella, but to no purpose, as I got no answer. All the consolation I got was from Binetti, Toscani and Baletti, who dined or supped with me every day. The three rascals came to see me one by one and each tried to get me to give him money unknown to the other two, and each promised that, if I would do that, he would get me out of the difficulty. Each would have been content with three or four hundred louis, but, even if I had given that sum to one of them, I had no guarantee that the others would desist from their persecution. Indeed, if I had done so, I should have given some ground to their pretensions and bad would have been made worse. My answer was that they wearied me and that I should be glad if they would desist from visiting me.

On the fifth day of my arrest the duke left for Frankfort, and the same day Binetti came and told me from her lover that the duke had promised the officers not to interfere and that I was therefore in danger of an iniquitous sentence. His advice was to neglect no means of getting out of the difficulty, to sacrifice all my property, diamonds and jewellery and thus to obtain a release from my enemies. La Binetti, like a wise woman, disliked this counsel and I relished it still less, but she had to perform her commission.

I had jewellery and lace to the value of more than a hundred thousand francs, but I could not resolve to make the sacrifice. I did not know which way to turn or where to go and, while I was in this state of mind, my barrister came in. He spoke as follows:

"Sir, all my endeavours on your behalf have been unsuccessful. There is a clique against you which seems to have support in some high quarter and which silences the voice of justice. It is my duty to warn you that, unless you find some way of arranging matters with these rascals, you are a ruined man. The judgment given by the police magistrate, a rascal like the rest of them, is of a summary character, for, as a stranger, you will not be allowed to have recourse to the delays

of the law. You would require bail to do that. They have managed to procure witnesses who swear that you are a professional gamester, that it was you who seduced the three officers into the house of your countryman, Peccini, that it is not true that your wine was drugged, that you did not lose your watches nor your snuffbox, for, they say, these articles will be found in your mails when your goods are sold. For that you will only have to wait till to-morrow or the day after, and do not think that I am deceiving you in any particular or you will be sorry for it. They will come here and empty your mails, boxes and pockets, a list will be made and they will be sold by auction the same day. If the sum realised is greater than the debt, the surplus will go in costs and you may depend upon it that a very small sum will be returned to you; but if, on the other hand, the sum is not sufficient to pay everything, including the debt, costs, expenses of the auction, etc., you will be enrolled as a common soldier in the forces of His Most Serene Highness. I heard it said to the officer, who is your greatest creditor, that the four louis enlistment money would be taken into account and that the duke would be glad to get hold of such a fine man."

The barrister left me without my noticing it, I was so petrified by what he had said. I was in such a state of collapse that in less than an hour all the liquids in my body must have escaped. I, a common soldier in the army of a petty sovereign like the duke, who existed only by the horrible traffic in human flesh which he carried on after the manner of the Elector of Hesse. I, despoiled by those knaves, the victim of an iniquitous sentence. Never! I would endeavour to hit upon some plan to gain time.

I began by writing to my chief creditor that I had decided to come to an agreement with them, but wished them all to wait upon my notary, with witnesses, to put a formal close to the action and render me a free man again.

I calculated that one of them was sure to be on duty on the morrow and thus I should gain a day at any rate. In the meantime I hoped to discover some way of escape.

I next wrote to the head of the police, whom I styled "Your Excellency" and "My Lord," begging him to vouchsafe his all-powerful protection. I told him that I had resolved on selling all my property, to put an end to the suit which threatened to overwhelm me, and I begged him to suspend the proceedings, the cost of which could only add to my difficulties. I also asked him to send me a trustworthy man to value my effects as soon as I had come to an agreement with my creditors, with whom I begged for his good offices. When I had done, I sent my Spaniard to deliver the letters.

The officer to whom I had written, who claimed that I was his debtor to the amount of two thousand louis, came to see me after dinner. I was in bed and told him I thought I had fever. He began to offer his sympathy and, genuine or not, I was pleased with it. He told me he had just had some conversation with the chief of police, who had shown him my letter.

"You are very wise," said he, "in consenting to a composition, but we need not all three be present. I have full powers from the other two and that will be sufficient for the notary."

"I am in bad enough case," I replied, "for you to grant me the favour of seeing you all together; I cannot think you will refuse me."

"Well, well, you shall be satisfied, but, if you are in a hurry to leave Stuttgart, I must warn you that we cannot come before Monday, for we are on duty for the next four days."

"I am sorry to hear it, but I will wait. Give me your word of honour that all proceedings shall be suspended in the meantime."

"Certainly; here is my hand and you may reckon on me. In my turn I have a favour to ask. I like your post-chaise; will you let me have it for what it cost you?"

"With pleasure."

"Be kind enough to call the landlord and tell him in my presence that the carriage belongs to me."

"I had the landlord upstairs and did as the rascal had asked me, but mine host told him that he could dispose of it after he had paid for my lodging, and with that he turned his back on him and left the room."

"I am certain of having the chaise," said the officer, laughing. He then embraced me and went away.

I had derived so much pleasure from my talk with him that I felt quite another man. I had four days before me; it was a rare piece of good luck.

Some hours after an honest-looking fellow who spoke Italian well came to tell me, from the chief of police, that my creditors would meet on the ensuing Monday and that he himself was appointed to value my goods. He advised me to make it a condition of the agreement that my goods should not be sold by auction and that my creditors should consider his valuation as final and binding. He told me that I would congratulate myself if I followed his advice.

I told him that I would not forget his services, and begged him to examine my mails and my jewel-box. He examined everything and told me that my lace alone was worthy twenty thousand francs. "In all," he added, "your goods are worth more than a hundred thousand francs, but I promise to tell your adversaries another story. Thus, if you can persuade them to take half their debt, you will get off with half your effects."

"In that case," I said, "you shall have fifty louis, and here are six as an earnest."

"I am grateful to you and you can count upon my devotion. The whole town and the duke as well know your creditors to be knaves, but he has his reasons for refusing to see their conduct in its true light."

I breathed again, and now all my thoughts were concentrated on making my escape with all I possessed, my poor chaise excepted. I had a difficult task before me, but not so difficult a one as my flight from

The Leads and the recollection of my great escape gave me fresh courage.

My first step was to ask Toscani, Baletti and the dancer Binetti to supper, as I had measures to concert with these friends of mine, whom I could rely on and who had nothing to fear from the resentment of the three rascals.

After we had had a good supper, I told them how the affair stood and that I was determined to escape and to carry my goods with me. "And now," I said, "I want your advice."

After a brief silence Binetti said, if I could get to his house, I could lower myself down from a window and, once on the ground, I should be outside the town walls and at a distance of a hundred paces from the high road, by which I could travel post and be out of the duke's dominions by daybreak. Thereupon Baletti opened the window and found that it would be impossible to escape that way, on account of a wooden roof above a shop. I looked out also and, seeing that he was right, I said that I should no doubt hit on some way of making my escape from the inn, but what troubled me chiefly was my luggage. La Toscani then said:

"You will have to abandon your mails, which you could not take off without attracting attention, and you must send all your effects to my house. I engage to deliver safely whatever you may put in my care. I will take away your effects under my clothes in several journeys, and I can begin to-night."

Baletti thought this idea a good one and said that, to do it the quicker, his wife would come and help. We fixed on this plan and I promised Binetti to be with him at midnight on Sunday, even if I had to stab the sentry, who was at my door all day but went away at night after locking me in. Baletti said he would provide me with a faithful servant and a post-chaise with swift horses, which would take my effects in other mails. To make the best use of the time, la Toscani began to load herself, putting two of my suits of clothes under her dress. For the next few days my friends served me so well that at midnight on Saturday my mails and my dressing-case were empty; I kept back all the jewellery, intending to carry it in my pocket.

On Sunday la Toscani brought me the keys of the two mails in which she had put my goods, and Baletti came also to tell me that all the necessary measures had been taken and that I should find a post-chaise, under the charge of his servant, waiting for me on the high road. So far, good; and the reader shall now hear how I contrived to escape from my inn.

The sentry confined himself to a small ante-chamber, where he walked up and down, without ever coming into my room except at my invitation. As soon as he heard that I had gone to bed, he locked the door and went off till the next day. He used to sup on a little table in a corner of the ante-room, his food being sent out by me. Profiting by my knowledge of his habits, I gave my Spaniard the following instructions:

"After supper, instead of going to bed, I shall hold myself in readiness for leaving my room and I shall leave it when I see the light extinguished in the ante-room, while I shall take care that my candle be so placed as not to show any light outside or reflect my shadow. Once out of the room, I shall have no difficulty in reaching the stairs and my escape will be accomplished. I shall go to Binetti's, leave the town by his house and wait for you at Fürstenburg. No one can hinder you from joining me in the course of a day or two. So, when you see me ready in my room—and this will be whilst the sentry is having his supper—put out the candle on the table; you can easily manage to do so whilst snuffing it. You will then take it to re-light it, and I shall seize that moment to slip out in the darkness. When you conclude that I have got out of the ante-room, you can rejoin the soldier, with the lighted candle, and help him to finish his bottle. By that time I shall be safe, and, when you tell him I have gone to bed, he will come to the door, wish me good night and, after locking the door and putting the key in his pocket, he will go away with you. It is not likely that he will come in and speak to me when he hears I have gone to bed."

Nevertheless, as he might possibly take it into his head to come into the room, I carefully arranged a wig-block in a nightcap on the pillow and huddled up the coverlet so as to deceive a casual glance.

All my plans were successful, as I heard afterwards from my Spaniard. Whilst he was drinking with the sentry, I was getting on my great coat, girding on my hanger (I had no longer a sword) and putting my loaded pistols in my pocket. As soon as the darkness told me that Le Duc had put out the candle, I went out softly and reached the staircase without making the least noise. Once there, the rest was easy, for the stair led into the passage and the passage to the main door, which was always open till nearly midnight.

I stepped out along the street and at a quarter to twelve I got to Binetti's and found his wife looking out for me at the window. When I was in the room whence I intended to escape, we lost no time. I threw my overcoat to Baletti, who was standing in the ditch below, up to the knees in mud, and, binding a strong cord round my waist, I embraced la Binetti and Baletti's wife, who lowered me down as gently as possible. Baletti received me in his arms, I cut the cord and, after taking my greatcoat, followed his footsteps. We strode through the mud and, going along a hedge, reached the high road in a state of exhaustion, although it was not more than a hundred paces as the crow flies from where we stood to the house. At a little distance off, beside a small wayside inn, we found the post-chaise, in which sat Baletti's servant. He got out, telling us that the postillion had just gone into the inn to have a glass of beer and light his pipe. I took the good servant's place and gave him a reward and begged them both to be gone, saying I would manage all the rest myself.

It was April second, 1760, my birthday—a remarkable date all through my life because not a single birthday has passed without something good or ill befalling me.

I had been in the carriage for two or three minutes when the postillion came and asked if we had much longer to wait. He thought he was speaking to the same person that he had left in the chaise, and I did not undeceive him. "Drive on," I answered, "and make one stage of it from here to Tübingen, without changing horses at Waldenbach." He followed my instructions, and we went along at a good pace, but I had a strong inclination to laugh at the face he made when he saw me at Tübingen. Baletti's servant was a youth and slightly built; I was tall and quite a man. He opened his eyes to the utmost width and told me I was not the same gentleman that was in the carriage when he started. "You're drunk," said I, putting in his hand four times what he was accustomed to get, and the poor devil did not say a word. Who has not experienced the persuasive influence of money? I went on my journey and did not stop till I reached Fürstenburg, where I was quite safe.

I had eaten nothing on the way and, by the time I got to the inn, I was dying of hunger. I had a good supper brought to me and then I went to bed and slept well. As soon as I awoke, I wrote to my three rascals. I promised to wait ten days for them at the place from which I dated the letter, and I challenged them harshly to a duel, swearing that I would publish their cowardice all over Europe if they refused to measure swords with me. I next wrote to la Toscani, to Baletti and to the good-natured mistress of the Austrian ambassador, commending Le Duc to their care and thanking them for their friendly help.

The three rascals did not come, but the landlord's two daughters, both of them pretty, made me pass the three days very agreeably.

On the fourth day, towards noon, I had the pleasure of seeing my faithful Spaniard riding into the town, carrying his portmanteau on his saddle.

"Sir," said he, "all Stuttgart knows you to be here and I fear lest the three officers who were too cowardly to accept your challenge may have you assassinated. If you are wise, you will set out for Switzerland forthwith."

"That's cowardly, my lad," said I. "Don't be afraid about me, but tell me all that happened after my escape."

"As soon as you were gone, sir, I carried out your instructions and helped the poor devil of a sentry to empty his bottle, though he would have willingly dispensed with my assistance in the matter; I then told him you had gone to bed and he locked the door as usual and went away, after shaking me by the hand. After he had gone, I went to bed. Next morning the worthy man was at his post by nine o'clock and at ten the three officers came and, on my telling them that you were still asleep, they went away, bidding me to come to a coffee-house and summon them when you got up. As they waited and waited to no purpose, they came again at noon and told the soldier to open the door. What followed amused me, though I was in some danger in the midst of the rascals.

"They went in and, taking the wig-block for your head, they came up to the bed and politely wished you 'good morning.' You took no

notice, so one of them proceeded to give you a gentle shake and the bauble fell and rolled along the floor. I roared with laughter at the sight of their amazement.

"'You laugh, do you, rascal? Tell us where your master is.' And, to give emphasis to their words, they accompanied them with some strokes of the cane.

"I was not going to stand this sort of thing, so I told them, with an oath, that, if they did not stop, I should defend myself, adding that I was not my master's keeper and advising them to ask the sentry.

"The sentry on his part swore by all the saints that you must have escaped by the window, but, in spite of this, a corporal was summoned and the poor man was sent to prison.

"The clamour that was going on brought up the landlord, who opened your mails and, on finding them empty, said that he would be well enough paid by your post-chaise, replying only with a grin to the officer who claimed you had given it him.

"In the midst of the tumult a superior officer came up, who decided that you must have escaped through the window, and ordered the sentry to be set at liberty on the spot. Then came my turn, for, as I kept on laughing and answered all questions by 'I don't know,' these gentlemen had me taken to prison, telling me I should stay there till I informed them where you, or at least your effects, could be found.

"The next day one of them came to the prison and told me that, unless I confessed, I should undoubtedly be sent to the galleys.

"'On the faith of a Spaniard,' I answered, 'I know nothing, but, if I did, it would be all the same to you, for no one can make an honest servant betray his master.'

"At this the rascal told the turnkey to give me a taste of the lash and, after this had been done, I was set at liberty.

"My back was somewhat scarified, but I had the proud consciousness of having done my duty, and I went back and slept at the inn, where they were glad to see me. Next morning every one knew you were here and had sent a challenge to the three sharpers, but the universal opinion was that they were too knowing to risk their lives by meeting you. Nevertheless, Madame Baletti told me to beg you to leave Fürstenburg, as they might very likely have you assassinated. The landlord sold your chaise and your mails to the Austrian ambassador, who, they say, let you escape from a window in the apartment occupied by his mistress. As for me, I arrived here without any hindrance."

Three hours after Le Duc's arrival I took post and went to Schaffhausen and from there to Zurich with hired horses, as there are no posts in Switzerland. At Zurich I put up at the Sword, an excellent inn.

After supper, pondering over my arrival in Zurich, where I had dropped from the clouds, as it were, I began to reflect seriously upon my present situation and the events of my past life. I recalled my misfortunes and scrutinised my conduct and was not long in concluding that all I had suffered was through my own fault and that, when

Fortune would have crowned me with happiness, I had persistently trifled that happiness away. I had just succeeded in escaping from a trap where I might have perished, or at least have been overwhelmed with shame, and I shuddered at the thought. I resolved to be no more Fortune's plaything, but to escape entirely from her hands. I calculated my assets and found I was possessed of a hundred thousand crowns. "With that," said I, "I can live secure amidst the changes and chances of this life and I shall at last experience true happiness."

I went to bed pondering over these fancies, and my sleep was full of happy dreams. I saw myself dwelling in a retired spot amidst peace and plenty. I thought I was surrounded on all sides by a fair expanse of country which belonged to me, where I enjoyed that freedom the world cannot give. My dreams had all the force of reality, till a sudden awakening at daybreak came to give them the lie. But the imaginary bliss I had enjoyed had so taken my fancy that I could not rest till I realised it. I arose, dressed myself hastily and went out, with no breakfast and without knowing where I was going.

I walked on and on, absorbed in contemplation, and did not really awake till I found myself in a ravine between two lofty mountains. Stepping forward, I reached a valley surrounded by mountains on all sides and in the distance a fine church, attached to a pile of buildings, magnificently situated. I guessed it to be a monastery and made my way towards it.

The church door was open and I went in and was amazed at the rich marbles and the beauty of the altars; and, after hearing the last mass, I went to the sacristy and found myself in a crowd of Benedictines.

The abbot, whom I recognised by his cross, came towards me and asked if I wished to see the church and monastery. I replied that I should be delighted, and he, with two other brethren, offered to show me all. I saw their rich ornaments, chasubles embroidered with gold and pearls, the sacred vessels adorned with diamonds and other precious stones, a rich balustrade, etc.

As I understand German very imperfectly and the Swiss dialect (which is hard to acquire and bears the same relation to German that Genoese does to Italian) not at all, I began to speak Latin and asked the abbot if the church had been built for long. Thereupon the very reverend father entered into a long history, which would have made me repent my inquisitiveness if he had not finished by saying that the church was consecrated by Jesus Christ Himself. This was carrying its foundation rather far back and no doubt my face expressed some surprise, for, to convince me of the truth of the story, the abbot bade me follow him into the church, and there on a piece of marble pavement he showed me the imprint of the foot of Jesus, which He had left there at the moment of the consecration, to convince the infidels and to save the bishop the trouble of consecrating the church.

The abbot had had this divinely revealed to him in a dream and,

going into the church to verify the vision, he saw the print of the Divine Foot and gave thanks to the Lord.

CHAPTER 68

THE cool way in which the abbot told these cock-and-bull stories gave me an inclination to laughter, which the holiness of the place and the laws of politeness had much difficulty in restraining. All the same, I listened with such an attentive air that his reverence was delighted with me and asked where I was staying.

"Nowhere," said I. "I came from Zurich on foot and my first visit was to your church."

I do not know whether I pronounced these words with an air of compunction, but the abbot joined his hands and lifted them to heaven, as if to thank God for touching my heart and bringing me there to lay down the burden of my sins. I have no doubt that these were his thoughts, as I have always had the look of a great sinner.

The abbot said it was near noon and he hoped I would do him the honour of dining with him, and I accepted with pleasure, for I had had nothing to eat and knew that there is usually good cheer in such places. I did not know where I was and did not care to ask, being willing to leave him under the impression that I was a pilgrim come to expiate my sins.

On our way from the church the abbot told me that his monks were fasting, but that we should eat meat in virtue of a dispensation he had received from Benedict XIV, which allowed him to eat meat all the year round with his guests. I replied that I would join him all the more willingly as the Holy Father had given me a similar dispensation. This seemed to excite his curiosity about myself and, when we got to his room (which did not look the cell of a penitent) he hastened to show me the brief, which he had framed and glazed and hung up opposite the table so that the curious and scrupulous might have it in full view.

As the table was laid for only two, a servant in full livery came in and brought another cover, and the humble abbot then told me that he usually had his chancellor with him at dinner. "For," said he, "I have a chancery, since, as abbot of Our Lady of Einsiedel, I am a prince of the Holy Roman Empire."

This was a relief to me, as I now knew where I was and no longer ran the risk of showing my ignorance in the course of conversation.

This monastery (of which I had heard before) was the Loretto of the Mountains and was famous for the number of pilgrims who resorted to it.

In the course of dinner the prince-abbot asked me where I came from, if I were married, if I intended to make a tour of Switzerland, adding that he should be glad to give me letters of introduction. I replied that I was a Venetian, a bachelor and should be glad to accept

the letters of introduction he had kindly offered me after I had had a private conference with him, in which I desired to take his advice on my conscience.

Thus, without premeditation and scarcely knowing what I was saying, I engaged to confess to the abbot. This was my way. Whenever I obeyed a spontaneous impulse, whenever I did anything of a sudden, I thought I was following the laws of my destiny and yielding to a Supreme Will. When I had thus plainly intimated to him that he was to be my confessor, he felt obliged to speak with religious fervour and his discourses seemed tolerable enough during a delicate and appetising repast, for we had snipe and woodcock, which made me exclaim, "What! game like that at this time of year?"

"It's a secret," said he, with a pleased smile, "which I shall be glad to communicate to you."

The abbot was a man of taste, for, though he affected sobriety, he had the choicest wines and the most delicious dishes on the table. A splendid salmon trout was brought, which made him smile with pleasure and, seasoning the good fare with a jest, he said in Latin that we must taste it, as it was fish and it was right to fast a little.

While he was talking, the abbot kept a keen eye on me and, as my fine dress made him feel certain I had nothing to ask of him, he spoke at ease.

When dinner was over, the chancellor bowed respectfully and went out. Soon after the abbot took me over the monastery, including the library, which contained a portrait of the Elector of Cologne in semi-ecclesiastical costume. I told him that the portrait was a good, though ugly, likeness, and drew out of my pocket the gold snuffbox the prince had given me, telling him that it was a speaking likeness. He looked at it with interest and thought His Highness had done well to be taken in the dress of a Grand Master. But I perceived that the elegance of the snuffbox did no harm to the opinion the abbot had conceived of me. As for the library, if I had been alone, it would have made me weep. It contained nothing under the size of folio, the newest books were a hundred years old and the subject matter of all these huge books was solely theology and controversy. There were Bibles, commentators, the Fathers, works on canon law in German, volumes of annals and Hoffman's dictionary.

"I suppose your monks have private libraries of their own," I said, "which contain accounts of travels, with historical and scientific works?"

"Not at all," he replied, "my monks are honest folk, who are content to do their duty and live in peace and sweet ignorance."

I do not know what happened to me at that moment, but a strange whim came into my head—I would be a monk, too. I said nothing about it at the moment, but begged the abbot to take me to his private chamber.

"I wish to make a general confession of all my sins," said I, "that

I may obtain the benefit of absolution and receive the Holy Eucharist on the morrow."

He made no answer, but led the way to a pretty little room and, without requiring me to kneel down, said he was ready to hear me.

I sat down before him and for three consecutive hours narrated scandalous histories innumerable, which, however, I told simply and not spicily, since I felt ascetically disposed and obliged myself to speak with a contrition I did not feel, for, when I recounted my follies, I was very far from finding the remembrance of them disagreeable.

In spite of that, the serene or reverend abbot believed at least in my contrition, for he told me that, since by the appointed means I had once more placed myself in a state of grace, contrition would be perfected in me. According to the good abbot, and still more according to me, without grace contrition is impossible.

After he had pronounced the sacramental words which take away the sins of men, he advised me to retire to the chamber he had appointed for me, pass the rest of the day in prayer and go to bed at an early hour, but he added that I could have supper if I was accustomed to that meal. He told me I might communicate at the first mass next morning, and with that we parted.

I obeyed with a docility which has puzzled me ever since, but at the time I thought nothing of it. I was left alone in a room which I did not even examine, and there I pondered over the idea which had come into my head before making my confession; and I quite made up my mind that chance, or rather my good genius, had led me to that spot, where happiness awaited me and where I might shelter all my days from the whims of Fortune.

"Whether I stay here," said I, "depends on myself alone, as I am sure the abbot will not refuse me the cowl if I give him ten thousand crowns for my support."

All that was needed to secure my happiness seemed a library of my own choosing, and I did not doubt but that the abbot would let me have what books I pleased if I promised to leave them to the monastery after my death.

As to the society of the monks, the discord, envy and all the bickerings inseparable from such a mode of life, I thought I had nothing to fear in that way, since I had no ambitions which could rouse the jealousy of the other monks. Nevertheless, despite my fascination, I foresaw the possibility of repentance and shuddered at the thought, but I had a cure for that also.

"When I ask for the habit," I said, "I will also ask that my novitiate be extended for ten years and, if repentance does not come in ten years, it will not come at all. I shall declare that I do not wish for any cure or any ecclesiastical dignity. All I want is peace and leave to follow my own tastes, without scandalising anyone." I thought I could easily remove any objections which might be made to the long term of my novitiate by agreeing, in case I changed my mind, to forfeit the ten thousand crowns which I would pay in advance.

I put down this fine idea in writing before I went to bed, and in the morning, finding myself unshaken in my resolve, after I had communicated, I gave my plan to the abbot, who was taking chocolate in his room.

He immediately read my plan and, without saying anything, put it on the table and after breakfast walked up and down the room and read it again, and finally told me he would give me an answer after dinner.

I waited till noon with the impatience of a child who has been promised toys on its birthday—so completely and suddenly can an infatuation change one's nature. We had as good a dinner as on the day before, and, when we had risen from the table, the good abbot said:

"My carriage is at the door to take you to Zurich. Go, and let me have a fortnight to think it over. I will bring my answer in person. In the meanwhile here are two sealed letters, which please deliver yourself."

I replied that I would obey his instructions and would wait for him at the Sword, in the hope that he would deign to grant my wishes. I took his hand, which he allowed me to kiss, and then set out for Zurich.

As soon as my Spaniard saw me, the rascal began to laugh. I guessed what he was thinking and asked him what he was laughing for.

"I am amazed to see that, no sooner do you arrive in Switzerland, than you contrive to find some amusement which keeps you away for two whole days."

"Ah, I see; go and tell the landlord that I shall want the use of a good carriage for the next fortnight and also a guide on whom I can rely."

My landlord, whose name was Ote, had been a captain and was thought a great deal of in Zurich. He told me that all the carriages in the neighbourhood were uncovered. I said they would do, as there was nothing better to be had, and he informed me I could trust the servant he would provide me with.

Next morning I took the abbot's letters. One was for a M. Orelli and the other for a M. Pestalozzi, neither of whom I found at home; but in the afternoon they both called on me, asked me to dinner and made me promise to come with them the same evening to a concert. This is the only species of entertainment allowed at Zurich and only members of the musical society can be present, with the exception of strangers, who have to be introduced by a member and are then admitted on the payment of a crown. The two gentlemen both spoke in very high terms of the Abbot of Einsiedel.

I thought the concert a bad one and got bored at it. The men sat on the right hand and the women on the left. I was vexed with this arrangement, for, in spite of my recent conversion, I saw three or four ladies who pleased me and whose eyes wandered a good deal in my direction. I should have liked to make love to them, to make the best of my time before I became a monk.

When the concert was over, men and women went out together and the two citizens presented me to their wives and daughters, who looked pleasant and were amongst those I had noticed.

Courtesy is necessarily cut short in the street and, after I had thanked the two gentlemen, I went home to the Sword.

Next day I dined with M. Orelli and had an opportunity of doing justice to his daughter's amiability, without, however, allowing her to perceive how she had impressed me. The day after I played the same part with M. Pestalozzi, although his charming daughter was pretty enough to excite my gallantry. But, to my own great astonishment, I was a mirror of discretion and in four days that was my reputation all over the town. I was quite astonished to find myself accosted in quite a respectful manner, to which I was not accustomed; but, in the pious state of mind I was in, this confirmed me in the belief that my idea of taking the cowl had been a divine inspiration. Nevertheless, I felt listless and weary, but I looked upon that as the inevitable consequence of so complete a change of life and thought it would disappear when I grew more accustomed to goodness.

In order to put myself as soon as possible on an equality with my future brethren, I passed three hours every morning in learning German. My master was an extraordinary man, a native of Genoa and an apostate Capuchin. His name was Giustiniani. The poor man, to whom I gave six francs every morning, looked upon me as an angel from Heaven, although I, with the enthusiasm of a devotee, took him for a devil of Hell, for he lost no opportunity of throwing a stone at the religious orders. Those orders which had the highest reputation were, according to him, the worst of all, since they led more people astray. He styled monks in general as a vile rabble, the curse of the human race.

"But," said I to him one day, "you will confess that Our Lady of Einsiedel. . ."

"What!" replied the Genoese, without letting me finish my remark, "do you think I should make an exception in favour of a set of forty ignorant, lazy, vicious, idle, hypocritical scoundrels who live bad lives under the cloak of humility and eat up the houses of the poor simpletons who provide for them, when they ought to be earning their own bread?"

"But how about His Reverend Highness the Abbot?"

"A stuck-up peasant who plays the part of a prince and is fool enough to think himself one."

"But he is a prince."

"As much a prince as I am. I look upon him as a mere buffoon."

"What has he done to you?"

"Nothing; but he is a monk."

"He is a friend of mine."

"I cannot retract what I have said, but I beg your pardon."

This Giustiniani had a great influence upon me, although I did

not know it for I thought my vocation was sure. But my idea of becoming a monk at Einsiedel came to an end as follows:

The day before the abbot was coming to see me, at about six o'clock in the evening, I was sitting at my window, which looked out on the bridge, and gazing at the passers-by, when all at once a carriage and four came up at a good pace and stopped at the inn. There was no footman on it and consequently the waiter came out and opened the door, and I saw four well dressed women leave the carriage. In the first three I saw nothing noticeable, but the fourth, who was dressed in a riding habit, struck me at once with her elegance and beauty. She was a brunette with fine and well set eyes, arched eyebrows and a complexion in which the hues of the lily and the rose were mingled. Her bonnet was of blue satin with a silver fillet, which gave her an air I could not resist. I stretched out from the window as far as I could and she lifted her eyes and looked at me as if I had bade her do so. My strained position caused her to look at me for half a minute—too much for a modest woman and more than was required to set me all ablaze.

I ran and took up my position at the window of my ante-chamber, which commanded a view of the staircase, and before long I saw her running by to rejoin her three companions. When she got opposite where I was, she chanced to turn in that direction and, on seeing me, cried out as if she had seen a ghost; but she soon recollected herself and ran away, laughing like a madcap, and rejoined the other ladies, who were already in their room.

Reader, put yourself in my place and tell me how I could have avoided this meeting. And you who would bury yourselves in monastic shades, persevere, if you can, after you have seen what I saw at Zurich on April twenty-third.

I was in such a state of excitement that I had to lie down on my bed. After resting a few minutes, I got up and almost unconsciously went towards the passage window and saw the waiter coming out of the ladies' room.

"Waiter," said I, "I will take supper in the dining-room with everybody else."

"If you want to see those ladies, that won't do, as they have ordered their supper to be brought up to them. They want to go to bed in good time, as they are to leave at daybreak."

"Where are they going?"

"To Our Lady of Einsiedel to pay their vows."

"Where do they come from?"

"From Soleure."

"What are their names?"

"I don't know."

I went to lie down again and thought how I could approach the fair one of my thoughts. Should I go to Einsiedel, too? But what could I do when I got there? These ladies are going to make their confessions; I could not get into the confessional. What kind of a

figure should I cut among the monks? And, if I were to meet the abbot on the way, how could I help returning with him? If I had had a trusty friend, I would have arranged an ambuscade and carried off my charmer. It would have been an easy task, as she had nobody to defend her. What if I were to pluck up heart and beg them to let me sup in their company? I was afraid of the three devotees; I should meet with a refusal. I judged that my charmer's devotion was more a matter of form than anything else, as her physiognomy declared her to be a lover of pleasure, and I had long been accustomed to read women's characters by the play of their features.

I did not know which way to turn, when a happy idea came into my head. I went to the passage window and stayed there till the waiter went by. I had him into the room and began my discourse by sliding a piece of gold into his hand. I then asked him to lend me his green apron, as I wished to wait upon the ladies at supper.

"What are you laughing at?"

"At your taking such a fancy, sir, though I think I know why."

"You are a sharp fellow."

"Yes, sir, as sharp as most of them; I will get you a new apron. The pretty one asked me who you were."

"What did you tell her?"

"I said you were an Italian; that's all."

"If you will hold your tongue, I will double that piece of gold."

"I have asked your Spaniard to help me, sir, as I am single-handed and supper has to be served at the same time both upstairs and downstairs."

"Very good; but the rascal mustn't come into the room or he would be sure to laugh. Let him go to the kitchen, bring up the dishes and leave them outside the door."

The waiter went out and returned soon after with the apron and Le Duc, to whom I explained in all seriousness what he had to do. He laughed like a madman, but assured me he would follow my directions. I procured a carving-knife, tied my hair in a queue, took off my coat and put on the apron over my scarlet waistcoat ornamented with gold lace. I then looked at myself in the glass and thought my appearance mean enough for the modest part I was about to play. I was delighted at the prospect and thought to myself that, as the ladies came from Soleure, they would speak French.

Le Duc came to tell me that the waiter was going upstairs. I went into the ladies' room and said, "Supper is about to be served, ladies."

"Make haste about it, then," said the ugliest of them, "as we have to rise before daybreak."

I placed the chairs round the table and glanced at my fair one, who looked petrified. The waiter came in and I helped him put the dishes on the table, and he then said to me, "Do you stay here, as I have to go downstairs."

I took a plate and stood behind a chair facing the lady, and, without appearing to look at her, I saw her perfectly, or rather I saw nothing

else. She was astonished, the others did not give me a glance and they could not have pleased me better. After the soup I hurried to change her plate and then did the same office for the rest; they helped themselves to the boiled beef.

While they were eating, I took a boiled capon and cut it up in a masterly manner.

"We have a waiter who knows his work," said the lady of my thoughts.

"Have you been long at this inn?"

"Only a few weeks, madame."

"You wait very well."

"Madame is very good."

I had tucked in my superb ruffles of English point lace, but my frilled shirt-front of the same material protruded slightly through my vest, which I had not buttoned carefully. She saw it and said, "Come here a moment."

"What does madame require?"

"Let me see it. What beautiful lace!"

"So I have been told, madame, but it is very old. An Italian gentleman who was staying here made me a present of it."

"You have ruffles of the same kind, I suppose?"

"Yes, madame." And, so saying, I stretched out my hand, unbuttoning my waistcoat. She gently drew out the ruffle and seemed to place herself in a position to intoxicate me with the sight of her charms, although she was tightly laced. What an ecstatic moment! I knew she had recognised me and the thought that I could not carry the masquerade beyond a certain point was a veritable torment to me.

When she had looked a long time, one of the others said, "You are certainly very curious, my dear; one would think you had never seen lace before."

At this she blushed.

When the supper was done, the three ugly ladies each went aside to undress, while I took away the dishes and my heroine began to write. I confess that I was almost infatuated enough to think she was writing to me; however, I had too high an opinion of her to entertain the idea.

As soon as I had taken away the dishes, I stood by the door in the respectful manner becoming the occasion.

"What are you waiting for?" said she.

"For your orders, madame."

"Thank you, I don't want anything."

"Your boots, madame, you will like them removed before you retire."

"True, but still I don't like to give you so much trouble."

"I am here to attend on you, madame."

So saying, I knelt on one knee before her and slowly unlaced her boots, while she continued writing. I went further; I unbuckled her garters, delighting in the contemplation and still more in the touch

of her delicately shaped legs, but too soon for me she turned her head and said:

"That will do, thank you. I did not notice that you were giving yourself so much trouble. We shall see you to-morrow evening."

"Then you will sup here, ladies?"

"Certainly."

I took her boots away and asked if I should lock the door.

"No, my good fellow," said she, in the voice of a siren, "leave the key inside."

Le Duc took the charmer's boots from me and said, laughing, "She has caught you."

"What?"

"I saw it all, sir; you played your part as well as any actor in Paris; and I am certain she will give you a louis to-morrow, but, if you don't hand it over to me, I will blow on the whole thing."

"That's enough, you rascal; get me my supper as quickly as possible."

Such are the pleasures which old age no longer allows me to enjoy, except in memory. There are monsters who preach repentance and philosophers who treat all pleasures as vanity. Let them talk on. Repentance befits only crimes and pleasures are realities, though all too fleeting.

A happy dream made me pass the night with the fair lady; doubtless it was a delusion but a delusion full of bliss. What would I not give now for such dreams, which made my nights so sweet!

Next morning at daybreak I was at her door with her boots in my hand just as their coachman came to call them. I asked them, as a matter of form, if they would have breakfast, and they replied merrily that they had made too good a supper to have any appetite at such an early hour. I went out of the room to give them time to dress, but the door was half-open and I saw reflected in the glass the snow-white bosom of my fair one; it was an intoxicating sight. When she had laced herself and put on her dress, she called for her boots. I asked if I should put them on, to which she consented with a good grace and, as she had green velvet breeches, she seemed to consider herself as almost a man. And, after all, a waiter is not worth putting oneself out about. All the worse for him if he dare conceive any hopes from the trifling concessions he receives. His punishment will be severe, for who would have thought he could have presumed so far? As for me, I am now, sad to say, grown old and enjoy some few privileges of this description, which I relish, though despising myself and still more those who thus indulge me.

After she had gone, I went to sleep again, hoping to see her in the evening. When I awoke, I heard that the abbot of Einsiedel was in Zurich, and my landlord told me that His Reverend Highness would dine with me in my room. I told him that I wished to treat the abbot well and he must get the best dinner he could for us.

At noon the worthy prelate was shown up to my room, and began

by complimenting me on the good reputation I had in Zurich, saying that this made him believe that my vocation was a real one.

"The following distich," he added, "should now become your motto:

*"Inveni portum. Spes et fortuna valete;
Nil mihi vobiscum est; ludite nunc alios."*

"That is a translation of two verses from Euripides," I answered, "but, my lord, they will not serve me, as I have changed my mind since yesterday."

"I congratulate you," said he, "and I hope you will accomplish all your desires. I may tell you confidentially that it is much easier to save one's soul in the world where one can do good to one's neighbours, than in the convent, where a man does no good to himself nor to any one else."

This was not speaking like the hypocrite Giustiniani had described to me; on the contrary, it was the language of a good and sensible man.

We had a princely dinner, as my landlord had made each of the three courses a work of art. The repast was enlivened by an interesting conversation, to which wit and humour were not lacking. After coffee I thanked the abbot with the greatest respect and accompanied him to his carriage, where the reverend father reiterated his offers of serving me, and thus, well pleased with one another, we parted.

The presence and the conversation of this worthy priest had not for a moment distracted my thoughts from the pleasing object with which they were occupied. As soon as the abbot had gone, I went to the bridge to await the blessed angel, who seemed to have been sent from Soleure with the express purpose of delivering me from the temptation to become a monk, which the Devil had put into my heart. Standing on the bridge I built many a fine castle in Spain, and about six in the evening I had the pleasure of seeing my fair traveller once more. I hid myself, so as to see without being seen. I was greatly surprised to see them all four looking towards my window. Their curiosity showed me that the lady had told them of the secret and with my astonishment there was some admixture of anger. This was only natural, as I not only saw myself deprived of the hope of making any further advances, but I felt I could no longer play my part of waiter with any confidence. In spite of my love for the lady, I would not for the world become the laughing-stock of her three plain companions. If I had interested her in my favour, she would certainly not have divulged my secret, and I saw in her doing so proof positive that she did not want the jest to go any farther, or rather of her want of that wit so necessary to ensure the success of an intrigue. If the three companions of my charmer had had anything attractive about them, I might possibly have persevered and defied misfortune; but, in the same measure as beauty cheers my heart, ugliness depresses it. Anticipating the melancholy which I foresaw would result from this

disappointment, I went out with the idea of amusing myself and, happening to meet Giustiniani, I told him of my misfortune, saying that I should not be sorry to make up for it by a couple of hours of the society of some mercenary beauty.

"I will take you to a house," said he, "where you will find what you want. Go up to the second floor and you will be well received by an old woman if you whisper my name to her. I dare not accompany you, as I am well known in the town and it might get me into trouble with the police, who are ridiculously strict in these matters. Indeed, I advise you to take care that nobody sees you going in."

I followed the ex-Capuchin's advice and waited for the dusk of the evening. I had a good reception, but the supper was poor and the hours I spent with two young girls of the working class were tedious. They were pretty enough, but my head was full of my perfidious charmer, and besides, despite their neatness and prettiness, they were wanting in that grace which adds so many charms to pleasure. The liberality of my payment, to which they were not accustomed, captivated the old woman, who said she would get me all the best stuff in the town; but she warned me to take care that nobody saw me going into her house.

When I got back, Le Duc told me that I had been wise to slip away, as my masquerade had become generally known and the whole house, including the landlord, had been eagerly waiting to see me play the part of waiter. "I took your place," he added. "The lady who has taken your fancy is Madame M— and I must confess I've never seen anyone so appetising."

"Did she ask where the other waiter was?"

"No, but the other ladies asked what had become of you several times."

"And Madame M— said nothing?"

"She didn't open her mouth, but looked sad and seemed to care for nothing, till I said you were away because you were ill."

"That was stupid of you. Why did you say that?"

"I had to say something."

"True. Did you untie her shoe?"

"No; she did not want me to do so."

"Good. Who told you her name?"

"Her coachman. She is just married to a man older than herself."

I went to bed but could think only of the indiscretion and sadness of my fair lady. I could not reconcile the two traits in her character. Next day, knowing that she would be starting early, I posted myself at the window to see her get into the carriage but took care to arrange the curtain in such a way that I could not be seen. Madame M— was the last to get in, and, pretending that she wanted to see if it was raining, she took off her bonnet and lifted her head. Drawing the curtain with one hand and taking off my cap with the other, I wafted her a kiss with the tips of my fingers. In her turn she bowed graciously, returning my kiss with a good-natured smile.

CHAPTER 69

M. OTE, my landlord, introduced his two sons to me. He had brought them up like young princes. In Switzerland an innkeeper is not always a man of no account. There are many who are as much respected as people of far higher rank are in other countries. But each country has its own manners. My landlord did the honours of the table and thought it no degradation to make his guests pay for the meal. He was right; the only really degrading thing in the world is vice. A Swiss landlord takes the chief place at table only to see that everyone is properly attended to. If he have a son, the latter does not sit down with his father but waits on the guests, napkin in hand. At Schaffhausen my landlord's son, who was a captain in the Imperial army, stood behind my chair and changed my plate, while his father sat at the head of the table. Anywhere else the son would have been waited on, but in his father's house he thought, and rightly, that it was an honour to wait.

Such are Swiss customs, of which persons of superficial understanding very foolishly make a jest. All the same, the vaunted honour and loyalty of the Swiss do not prevent them from fleecing strangers at least as much as the Dutch, but the greenhorns who let themselves be cheated learn thereby that it is well to bargain beforehand, and then they treat one well and charge reasonably. In this way, when I was at Bâle, I baffled the celebrated extortioner Imhoff, the landlord of The Three Kings.

M. Ote complimented me on my waiter's disguise and said he was sorry not to have seen me officiating; nevertheless, he said he thought I was wise not to repeat the jest. He thanked me for the honour I had done his house and begged me to do him the additional favour of dining at his table some day before I left. I answered that I would dine with him with pleasure that very day. I did so and was treated like a prince.

The reader will have guessed that the last look my charmer gave me had not extinguished the fire which the first sight of her had kindled in my breast. It had rather increased my flame by giving me hopes of being better acquainted with her; in short, it inspired me with the idea of going to Soleure in order to give a happy ending to the adventure. I took a letter of credit on Geneva and wrote to Madame d'Urfé, begging her to give me a written introduction, couched in strong terms, to M. de Chavigni, the French ambassador, telling her that the interests of our order were deeply involved in my knowing this diplomatist and requesting her to address letters to me at the post office at Soleure. I also wrote to the Duke of Wurtemberg, but had no answer from him and indeed he must have found my epistle very unpleasant reading.

I visited the old woman whom Giustiniani had told me of several times before I left Zurich, and, although I ought to have been well satisfied as far as physical beauty was concerned, my enjoyment was very limited, as the nymphs I wooed spoke only the Swiss dialect, a rugged corruption of German. I have always found that love without speech

gives little enjoyment and I cannot imagine a more unsatisfactory mistress than a mute, were she as lovely as Venus herself.

I had scarcely left Zurich when I was obliged to stop at Baden to have the carriage M. Ote had got me mended. I might have started again at eleven but, on hearing that a young Polish lady on her way to Our Lady of Einsiedel was to dine at the common table, I decided to wait; but I had my trouble for nothing, as she turned out to be quite unworthy of the delay.

After dinner, while my horses were being put in, the host's daughter, a rather pretty girl, came into the room and made me waltz with her; it chanced to be a Sunday. All at once her father came in and the girl fled.

"Sir," said the rascal, "you are condemned to pay a fine of one louis."

"Why?"

"For having danced on a holy day."

"Get out; I won't pay."

"You will pay, though," said he, showing me a great parchment covered with writing I did not understand.

"I will appeal."

"To whom, sir?"

"To the judge of the place."

He left the room and in a quarter of an hour I was told that the judge was waiting for me in an adjoining chamber. I thought to myself that the judges were very polite in that part of the world, but, when I got into the room, I saw the rascally host buried in a wig and gown.

"Sir," said he, "I am the judge."

"Judge and plaintiff, too, as far as I can see."

He wrote in his book, confirming the sentence and mulcting me six francs for the cost of the case.

"But, if your daughter had not tempted me," said I, "I should not have danced; she is therefore as guilty as I."

"Very true, sir; here is a louis for her." So saying, he took a louis out of his pocket, put it into a desk beside him and said, "Now yours."

I began to laugh, paid my fine and put off my departure till the morrow.

As I was going to Lucerne, I saw the apostolic *nuncio*, who invited me to dinner, and at Fribourg Comte d'Afri's young and charming wife; but at ten leagues from Soleure I was a witness of the following curious circumstance:

I was stopping the night in a village and had made friends with the surgeon, whom I had found at the inn, and while supper, which he was to share with me, was getting ready, we walked about the village together. It was in the dusk of the evening and at a distance of a hundred paces I saw a man climbing up the wall of a house and finally vanishing through a window on the first floor.

"Look, there's a robber!" said I, pointing him out to the surgeon. He laughed and said:

"The custom may astonish you, but it is a common one in many parts

of Switzerland. The man you have just seen is a young lover who is going to pass the night with his future bride. Next morning he will leave, more ardent than before, as she will not allow him to go too far. If she was weak enough to yield to his desires, he would probably decline to marry her and she would find it difficult to get married at all."

At Soleure I found a letter from Madame d'Urfé, with an enclosure from the Duc de Choiseul to the ambassador, M. de Chavigni. It was sealed, but the duke's name was written below the address.

I made a court toilette, took a coach and went to call on the ambassador. His Excellency was not at home, so I left my card and the letter. It was a feast day and I went to high mass, not so much, I confess, to seek God as my charmer, but she was not there. After service I walked around the town and on my return found an officer who asked me to dine at the ambassador's.

Madame d'Urfé said that, on the receipt of my letter, she had gone straightway to Versailles and, with the help of Madame de Grammont, had got me an introduction of the kind I wanted. This was good news for me, as I desired to cut an imposing figure at Soleure. I had plenty of money and knew that this magic metal glittered in the eyes of all. M. de Chavigni had been ambassador at Venice thirty years before, and I kine a number of anecdotes about his adventures there and was eager to see what I could make out of him.

I went to his house at the time appointed and found all his servants in full livery, which I looked upon as a happy omen. My name was not announced and I remarked that, when I came in, both panels of the door were opened for me by the page. A fine old man came forward to meet me and, paying me many well turned compliments, introduced me to those present. Then, with the delicate tact of the courtier, pretending not to recollect my name, he drew the Duc de Choiseul's letter from his pocket and read aloud the paragraph in which the minister desired him to treat me with the utmost consideration. He made me sit on an easy chair at his right hand and asked me questions, to which I could only answer that I was travelling for my pleasure and considered the Swiss nation to be in many respects superior to all other nations whatsoever.

Dinner was served and His Excellency set me on his right hand in a position of equal honour to his own. We were sixteen in company and behind every chair stood a magnificent lackey in the ambassador's livery. In the course of conversation I got an opportunity of telling the ambassador that he was still spoken of in Venice with the utmost affection.

"I shall always remember," he said, "the kindness with which the Venetians treated me; but tell me, I beg, the names of those gentlemen who still remember me; they must be quite old now."

This was what I was waiting for. M. de Malipiero had told me of certain events which had happened during the regency, and M. de Bragadin had informed me of the ambassador's amours with the celebrated Stringhetta.

His Excellency's fare was perfect, but in the pleasure of conversing

I forgot that of eating. I told all my anecdotes so racily that his features expressed the pleasure I was affording him and, when we rose from table, he shook me by the hand and told me he had not had so agreeable a dinner since he had been at Soleure.

"The recollection of my Venetian gallantries," said the worthy old man, "makes me recall many a happy moment; I feel quite young again."

He embraced me and bade me consider myself as one of his family during my stay at Soleure.

After dinner he talked a good deal about Venice, praising the government and saying that there was not a town in the world where a man could fare better, provided he took care to get good oil and foreign wines. About five o'clock he asked me to come for a drive with him, getting into the carriage first to give me the best place.

We got out at a pretty country house, where ices were served to us. On our way back he said that he had a large party every evening and hoped I would do him the honour to be present whenever it suited my inclinations, assuring me that he would do his best to amuse me. I was impatient to take part in the assembly, as I felt certain I should see my charmer there. It was a vain hope, however, for I saw several ladies, some old and ugly, some passable, but not one pretty.

Cards were produced and I soon found myself at a table with a young lady of fair complexion and a plain-looking woman well advanced in years, who seemed, however, not to be destitute of wit. Though I was loosed, I played on and lost five or six hundred fish without opening my lips. When it came to a profit-and-loss account, the plain woman told me I owed three louis.

"Three louis, madame?"

"Yes, sir; we have been playing at two sous the fish. You thought, perhaps, we were playing for farthings."

"On the contrary, I thought it was for francs, as I never play lower." She did not answer this boast of mine, but she seemed annoyed. On re-joining the company after this very wearisome game, I proceeded to scrutinise all the ladies present rapidly but keenly, but I could not see her for whom I looked and was on the point of leaving when I happened to notice two ladies who were looking at me attentively. I recognised them directly. They were two of my fair one's companions, whom I had had the honour of waiting on at Zurich. I hurried off, pretending not to recognise them.

Next day, a gentleman in the ambassador's suite came to tell me that His Excellency was going to call on me. I told him that I would not go out till I had the honour of receiving his master, and I conceived the idea of questioning him concerning that which lay next to my heart. However, he spared me the trouble, as the reader will see for himself.

I gave M. de Chavigni the best reception I could and, after we had discussed the weather, he told me with a smile that he had the most ridiculous affair to broach to me, begging me to credit him when he said that he did not believe it for a moment.

"Proceed, my lord."

"Two ladies who saw you at my house yesterday told me in confidence after you had gone that I should do well to be on my guard, as you were the waiter at an inn in Zurich where they had stayed. They added that they had seen the other waiter by the Aar and that in all probability you had run away from the inn together, God alone knows why! They said, furthermore, that you slipped away from my house yesterday as soon as you saw them. I told them that even if you were not the bearer of a letter from His Grace the Duc de Choiseul I should have been convinced that they were mistaken, and that they should dine with you to-day if they would accept my invitation. I also hinted that you might have merely disguised yourself as a waiter in the hopes of winning some favours from them, but they rejected the hypothesis as absurd and said that you could carve a capon and change a plate dexterously enough, but were only a common waiter for all that, adding that, with my permission, they would compliment you on your skill to-day. 'Do so, by all means, ladies,' said I, 'M. Casanova and myself will be highly amused.'

"And now, do you mind telling me whether there be any foundation of truth in the whole story?"

"Certainly, my lord, I will tell you all without reserve, but in confidence, as this ridiculous report may injure the honour of one who is dear to me and whom I would not injure for the world."

"It is true, then? I am quite interested to hear all about it."

"It is true to a certain extent; I hope you don't take me for the real waiter at The Sword."

"Certainly not, but I suppose you played the part of waiter?"

"Exactly. Did they tell you that they were four in company?"

"Ah, I have it now! Pretty Madame M— was one of the party. That explains the riddle; now I understand everything. But you were quite right in saying that discretion was needful; she has a perfectly blameless reputation."

"Ah! I did not know that. What happened was quite innocent, but it might be so garbled in the telling as to become prejudicial to the honour of a lady whose beauty struck me with admiration."

I told him all the details of the case, adding that I had come to Soleure only in the hope of succeeding in my suit.

"If that prove an impossibility," said I, "I shall leave Soleure in three or four days; but I will first make the three ugly companions of my charmer ridiculous. They might have had sense enough to guess that the waiter's apron was only a disguise. They can pretend to be ignorant of the fact only in the hope of getting some advantage over me and injuring their friend, who was ill-advised to let them into the secret."

"Softly, softly, you go too fast and remind me of my own young days. Permit me to embrace you; your story has delighted me. You shall not go away; you shall stay here and court your charmer. To-day you can make two mischievous women ridiculous, but do it in an easy way. The thing is so straightforward that M. M— will be the first to laugh at it.

His wife cannot be ignorant of your love for her, and I know enough of women to pronounce that your disguise cannot have displeased her. She does know of your love?"

"Undoubtedly."

He went away laughing and at the door of his coach embraced me for the third time.

I could not doubt that my charmer had told the whole story to her three friends as they were returning from Einsiedel to Zurich, and this made the part they had played all the more ill-natured; but I felt that it was to my interest to let their malice pass for wit.

I went to the ambassador's at half-past one and, after making my bow to him, proceeded to greet the company and saw the two ladies. Thereupon, with a frank and generous air, I went up to the more malicious-looking of the two (she was lame, which may have made me think her more ill-looking) and asked if she recognised me.

"You confess, then, that you are the waiter at The Sword?"

"Well, not quite that, madame, but I confess that I was the waiter for an hour and that you cruelly disdained to address a single word to me, though I was only a waiter, because I longed for the bliss of seeing you. But I hope I shall be a little more fortunate here and that you will allow me to pay you my respectful homage."

"This is very wonderful! You played your part so well that the sharpest eye would have been deceived. Now we shall see if you play your new part as well. If you do me the honour to call on me, I will give you a good welcome."

After these complimentary speeches, the story became public property and the whole table was amusing itself with it when I had the happiness of seeing Monsieur and Madame M— coming into the room.

"There is the good-natured waiter," said she to her husband.

The worthy man stepped forward and politely thanked me for having done his wife the honour of taking off her boots.

This told me that she had concealed nothing and I was glad. Dinner was served, M. de Chavigni made my charmer sit at his right hand and I was placed between my two calumniators. I was obliged to hide my game, so, although I disliked them intensely, I made love to them, hardly raising my eyes to glance at Madame M—, who looked ravishing. I did not find her husband either as old or as jealous as I had expected. The ambassador asked him and his wife to stay the evening to an impromptu ball, and then said that, in order for me to be able to tell the Duc de Choiseul that I was well amused at Soleure, he would be delighted to have a play if Madame M— would act the fair *Ecosaise* again. She said she should be delighted, but two more actors were required.

"That is all right," said the kind old gentleman, "I will play Montrose."

"And I, Murray," I remarked.

My lame friend, angry at this arrangement, which left her only the very bad part of Lady Alton, could not help lancing a shaft at me.

"Oh! why isn't there a waiter's part in the play?" said she. "You would play it so well."

"That is well said, but I hope you will teach me to play Murray even better."

Next morning I got the words of my part and the ambassador told me that the ball would be given in my honour. After dinner I went to my inn and, after making an elaborate toilette, I returned to the brilliant company.

The ambassador begged me to open the ball and introduced me to the highest-born, but not the most beautiful, lady in the place. I then danced with all the ladies present until the good-natured old man got me the object of my vows as a partner in the quadrilles, which he did so easily that no one could have made any remark. "Lord Murray," said he, "must dance with no one but Lindane."

At the first pause I took the opportunity of saying that I had come to Soleure only for her sake, that it was for her sake that I had disguised myself at Zurich and that I hoped she would permit me to pay my addresses to her.

"I cannot invite you to my house," said she, "for certain sufficient reasons; but, if you will stay here some time, we shall be able to see each other. But I entreat you not to show me any marked attention in public, for there are those who will spy upon our actions and it is not pleasant to be talked about."

I was quite satisfied with this, and told her that I would do all in my power to please her, and that the most prying eyes should have nothing to fix on. I felt that the pleasure I looked forward to would be rendered all the sweeter by a tincture of mystery.

I had proclaimed myself as a novice in the mimic art and had entreated my lame friend to be kind enough to instruct me. I therefore went to her in the morning, but she could flatter herself that hers was only a reflected light, as I had opportunities for paying my court to my charmer in her house and, however great her vanity may have been, she must have had some suspicions of the truth.

This woman was a widow, aged between thirty and forty years, of a jaundiced complexion and a piercing and malicious aspect. In her efforts to hide the inequality of her legs, she walked with a stiff and awkward air; wishing to be thought a wit, she increased her natural dullness by a ceaseless flow of small talk. I persisted in behaving towards her with a great air of respect and one day she said that, having seen me in the disguise of a waiter, she would not have thought I was a man of a timid nature.

"In what respect do you think me timid?" said I, to which she gave no answer, but I knew perfectly well what she meant. I was tired of my part and had determined to play it no more when we had acted *l'Ecosaise*.

All the best people of Soleure were present at our first performance. The lame lady was delighted with the horror inspired by her acting, but she could have credited a great deal of it to her appearance. M. de

Chavigni drew forth the tears of the audience; his acting was said to be better than the great Voltaire's. As for me, I remember how near I was to fainting when, in the third scene of the fifth act, Lindane said to me: "What! You! You dare to love me?"

She pronounced these words with such fiery scorn that all the spectators applauded vehemently. I was almost put out of countenance, for I thought I detected in her voice an insult to my honour. However, I collected myself in the minute's respite which the loud applause gave me, and I replied: "Yes; I adore you! How should I not?"

So pathetically and tenderly did I pronounce these words that the hall rang again with the applause and the encores from four hundred throats made me repeat the words which, indeed, came from my heart.

In spite of the pleasure we had given to the audience, we judged ourselves not perfect in our parts and M. de Chavigni advised us to put off our second performance for a couple of days.

"We will have a rehearsal to-morrow at my country house," said he, "and I beg the favour of all your companies to dinner there."

However, we all made each other compliments on our acting. My lame friend told me I had played well, but not so well as in the part of waiter, which really suited me admirably. This sarcasm got the laugh on her side, but I returned it by telling her that my performance was a work of art, while her playing of Lady Alton was pure nature. M. de Chavigni told Madame M— that the spectators were wrong to applaud when she expressed her wonder at my loving her, since she had spoken the words disdainfully, and it was impossible that Lindane could have despised Murray.

The ambassador called for me the next day in his carriage and, when we reached his country house, we found all the actors assembled there. His Excellency addressed himself in the first place to M. M—, telling him he thought his business was as good as done and that they would talk about it after dinner.

We sat down to table and afterwards rehearsed the piece without any need of the prompter's assistance.

Towards evening the ambassador told the company that he would expect them to supper that evening at Soleure, and everyone left with the exception of the ambassador, myself and Monsieur and Madame M—. Just as we were going, I had an agreeable surprise.

"Will you come with me?" said the ambassador to M—. "We can talk the matter over at our ease. M. Casanova will have the honour of keeping your wife company in your carriage."

I gave the fair lady my hand respectfully and she took it with an air of indifference, but, as I was helping her in, she pressed my hand with all her might. The reader can imagine how that pressure made my blood circulate like fire in my veins.

Thus we were seated side by side, our knees pressed tenderly against one another. Half an hour seemed like a minute, but it must not be thought that we wasted the time. Our lips were glued together and were not parted till we came within ten paces of the ambassador's house,

which I could have wished at ten leagues' distance. She was the first to get down and I was alarmed to see the violent blush which overspread her whole face. Such redness looked unnatural; it might betray us; our spring of happiness would soon be dry. The watchful eye of the envious Alton would be fixed upon us and not in vain; her triumph would outweigh her humiliation. I was at my wits' end.

Love and luck, which have so favoured me throughout the course of my life, came to my aid. I had about me a small box containing hellebore. I opened it as if by instinct and invited her to take a small pinch. She did so and I followed her example; but the dose was too strong, and, as we were going up the stairs, we began to sneeze and for the next quarter of an hour we continued sneezing. People were obliged to attribute her high colour to the sneezing, or at least no one could give voice to any other supposition. When the sneezing fit was over, this woman, who was as clever as she was pretty, said her headache was gone, but she would take care another time not to take so strong a dose. I looked out of the corner of my eye at the malicious widow, who said nothing but seemed deep in thought.

This piece of good luck decided me on staying at Soleure till my love was crowned with success, and I determined to take a country house. I shall not have much opinion of my readers if they find themselves in my position—rich, young, independent, full of fire and having only pleasure to seek for—and do not follow my example. A perfect beauty was before me with whom I was madly in love and who, I was sure, shared that love. I had plenty of money and was my own master. I thought this a much better plan than turning monk, and I was above caring "what people would say." As soon as the ambassador had returned, which he always did at an early hour on account of his advanced age, I left the company and went to see him in his private room. In truth I felt I must give him that confidence which he had so well deserved.

As soon as he saw me he said, "Well, well, did you profit by the interview I got you?"

I embraced him and said, "I may hope for everything."

When I was telling him about the hellebore, he was lavish in his compliments on my presence of mind, for, as he said, such an unusual colour would have made people think there had been some kind of combat, a supposition which would not have tended towards my success.

After I had told him all, I imparted my plan.

"I shall do nothing in a hurry," said I, "as I have to take care that the lady's honour does not suffer, and I trust to time to see the accomplishment of my wishes. I shall need a pretty country house, a good carriage, two lackeys, a good cook and a housekeeper. All that I leave to Your Excellency, as I look upon you as my refuge and guardian angel."

"To-morrow, without fail, I will see what I can do, and I have good hopes of doing you a considerable service and rendering you well content with the attractions of Soleure."

Next day our rehearsal went off admirably and the day after the ambassador spoke to me as follows:

"So far as I can see, what you are aiming at in this intrigue is the satisfying of your desires without doing any harm to the lady's reputation. I think I know the nature of your love for her well enough to say that, if she told you that your leaving Soleure was necessary to her peace of mind, you would leave her at once. You see that I have sounded you well enough to be a competent adviser in this delicate and important affair, to which the most famous events in the annals of diplomacy are not to be compared."

"Your Excellency does not do sufficient justice to a career which has gained you such distinction."

"That is because I am an old man, my dear fellow, and have shaken off the rust and dust of prejudices and am able to see things as they really are and appreciate them at their true value. But let us return to your love affair. If you wish to keep it in the dark, you must avoid with the greatest care any action which may awaken suspicion in the minds of people who do not believe that anything is meaningless. The most malicious and censorious will not be able to see anything but the merest accident in the interview I procured you to-day, and the incident of the sneezing bout defies the most ill-natured to draw any deductions, for an eager lover does not begin his suit by sending the beloved one into convulsions. Nobody can guess that your hellebore was used to conceal the blush that your caresses had caused, since it does not often happen that an amorous combat leaves such traces, and how can you be expected to have foreseen the lady's blushes and to have provided yourself with a specific against them? In short, the events of to-day will not disclose your secret. M. M—who, although he wishes to pass for a man devoid of jealousy, is a little jealous—M. M—himself cannot have seen anything out of the common in my asking him to return with me, as I had business of importance with him and he has certainly no reasons for supposing that I should be likely to help you to intrigue with his wife. Furthermore, the laws of politeness would have forbidden me under any circumstances offering the lady the place I offered him, and, as he prides himself on his politeness, he can raise no possible objection to the arrangement which was made. To be sure, I am old and you are young—a distinction not unimportant in a husband's eyes."

"After this exordium," added the good-natured ambassador, with a laugh, "an exordium which I have delivered in the official style of a secretary of state, let us see where we are. Two things are necessary for you to obtain your wished-for bliss. The first thing, which concerns you more particularly, is to make M. M—your friend and conceal from him that you have conceived a passion for his wife, and here I will aid you to the best of my ability. The second point concerns the lady's honour; all your relations with her must appear open and above-board. Consider yourself under my protection; you must not even take a country house until we have found out some plan for throwing dust

into the eyes of the observant. However, you need not be anxious; I have hit upon a plan.

"You must pretend to be taken ill, but your illness must be of such a kind that your doctor will be obliged to take your word for the symptoms. Luckily, I know a doctor whose sole idea is to order country air for all complaints. This physician, who is about as clever as his brethren and kills or cures as well as any of them, will come and feel my pulse one of these days. You must ask his advice and for a couple of louis he will write you a prescription with 'country air' as the chief item. He will then inform everybody that your case is serious, but that he will answer for your cure."

"What is his name?"

"Doctor Herrenschwand."

"What is he doing here? I knew him in Paris; he was Madame du Romain's doctor."

"That is his brother. Now find out some polite complaint, which will do you credit with the public. It will be easy enough to find a house and I will get you an excellent cook to make your gruel and beef tea."

The choice of a complaint cost me some thought; I had to give it a good deal of attention. The same evening I managed to communicate my plan to Madame M—, who approved of it. I begged her to think of some way of writing to me and she said she would.

"My husband," said she, "has a very high opinion of you. He has taken no offence at our coming in the same carriage. But tell me, was it an accident or design that made M. de Chavigni take my husband and leave us together?"

"It was the result of design, dearest." She raised her beautiful eyes and bit her lips. "Are you sorry it was so?"

"Alas! . . . no."

In three or four days, on the day on which we were going to act *l'Ecossaise*, the doctor came to dine with the ambassador and stayed till the evening to see the play. At dessert he complimented me on my good health, on which I took the opportunity and told him that appearances were deceitful and that I should be glad to consult him the next day. No doubt he was delighted to be deceived in his estimate of my health, and he said he should be glad if he could be of any service. He called on me at the hour agreed upon and I told him such symptoms as my fancy dictated, amongst other things that I was subject to certain nocturnal irritations which made me extremely weak, especially in the reins.

"Quite so, quite so; it's a troublesome thing, but we will see what can be done. My first remedy, which you may possibly not care much for, is for you to pass six weeks in the country, where you will not see those objects which impress your brain, acting on the seventh pair of nerves and causing that lumbar discharge which no doubt leaves you in a very depressed state."

"Yes, it certainly does."

"Quite so, quite so. My next remedy is cold bathing."

"Are the baths far from here?"

"They are wherever you like. I will write you a prescription and the druggist will make it up."

I thanked him and, after he had pouched the double louis I slipped politely into his hand, he went away assuring me that I should soon experience an improvement in my health. By the evening the whole town knew that I was ill and had to go into the country. M. de Chavigni said pleasantly at dinner to the doctor that he should have forbidden me all feminine visitors; and my lame friend, adding to the idea, advised that I should above all be debarred access to certain portraits, of which I had a boxful. I laughed approvingly and begged M. de Chavigni, in the presence of the company, to help me to find a pretty house and a good cook, as I did not intend to take my meals alone.

I was tired of playing a wearisome part and had left off going to see my lame friend, but she soon reproached me for my inconstancy, telling me that I had made a tool of her. "I know all," said this malicious woman, "and I will be avenged."

"You cannot be avenged for nothing," said I, "for I have never done you an injury. However, if you intend to have me assassinated, I shall apply for police protection."

"We don't assassinate here," said she, savagely. "We are not Italians."

I was delighted to be relieved from the burden of her society. Thenceforth Madame M— was the sole object of my thoughts. M. de Chavigni, who seemed to delight in serving me, made her husband believe that I was the only person who could get the Duc de Choiseul to pardon a cousin of his who was in the guards and had had the misfortune to kill his man in a duel. "This," said the kindly old gentleman, "is the best way possible of gaining the friendship of your rival. Do you think you can manage it?"

"I am not positive of success."

"Perhaps I have gone a little too far; but I told him that, by means of your acquaintance with the Duchesse de Grammont, you could do anything with the minister."

"I must make you a true prophet; I will do all I can."

The outcome was that M. M.— informed me of the facts in the ambassador's presence and brought me all the papers relative to the case.

I spent the night in writing to the Duchesse de Grammont. I made my letter as pathetic as possible, with a view to touching her heart and then her father's; and I then wrote to the worthy Madame d'Urfé, telling her that the well-being of the Sublime Order of the Rosy Cross was concerned in the pardon of a Swiss officer who had been obliged to leave the kingdom on account of a duel in which the Order was highly concerned.

In the morning, after resting for an hour, I went to the ambassador and showed him the letter I had written to the duchess. He thought it excellently expressed and advised me to show it to M. M—. I found

him with his nightcap on; he was extremely grateful for the interest I took in the matter which was so near to his heart. He told me that his wife had not yet risen, and asked me to wait and take breakfast with her. I should have much liked to accept the invitation, but I begged him to make my excuses to his lady for my absence, on the pretence that I had to finish my letters and hand them to the courier, who was soon leaving. I hoped in this way, by the slight importance I attached to a meeting with his wife, to scatter any jealousy that might be hovering in his brain.

I went to dine with M. de Chavigni, who thought my conduct had been very politic and said that he was certain that thenceforth M. M— would be my best friend. He then showed me a letter from Voltaire thanking him for playing Montrose in his *Ecossaise*; and another from the Marquis de Chauvelin, who was then at Délices with the philosopher of Ferney. He promised to come and see him after he had been to Turin, where he had been appointed ambassador.

CHAPTER 70

THERE was a reception and supper at “the court,” as they styled the hotel of M. de Chavigni, or rather of the ambassador of the King of France in Switzerland. As I came in, I saw my charmer sitting apart reading a letter. I accosted her, apologising for not having stayed to breakfast, but she said I had done quite right, adding that, if I had not chosen a country house, she hoped I would take one her husband would probably mention to me that evening. She could not say any more, as she was called away to a game of quadrille. For my part I did not play, but wandered from one table to another.

At supper everybody talked to me about my health and my approaching stay in the country. This gave M. M— an opportunity to mention a delightful house near the Aar; “but,” he added, “it is not to be let for less than six months.”

“If I like it,” I replied, “and am free to leave it when I please, I will willingly pay the six months’ rent in advance.”

“There is a fine hall in it.”

“All the better; I will give a ball as evidence of my gratitude to the people of Soleure for the kind welcome I have received from them.”

“Would you like to come and see it to-morrow?”

“With pleasure.”

“Very good; then I will call for you at eight o’clock if that hour will suit you.”

“I shall expect you.”

When I got back to my lodging, I ordered a travelling carriage and four, and the next morning, before eight o’clock, I called for M. M—, who was ready and seemed flattered at my anticipating him.

“I tried to get my wife to come with us, but she is a sluggard, who prefers her bed to the fresh air.”

In less than an hour we reached our journey's end and I found the house a beautiful one and large enough to lodge the whole court of a prince of the Holy Roman Empire. Besides the hall, which I thought magnificent, I noted with great pleasure a closet arranged as a boudoir and covered with the most exquisite pictures. A fine garden, fountains, baths, several well furnished rooms, a good kitchen—in a word, everything pleased me and I begged M. M— to arrange for me to take up my abode there in two days' time.

When we got back to Soleure, Madame M— told me how pleased she was that I liked the house, and, seizing the opportunity, I said that I hoped they would often do me the honour of dining with me. They promised they would do so. I drew from my pocket a packet containing a hundred louis, which I gave M. M— to pay the rent. I then embraced him and, after imprinting a respectful kiss on the hand of his fair mate, I went to M. de Chavigni, who approved of my having taken the house, as it pleased my lady, and asked me if it was true that I was going to give a ball.

"Yes, if I see any prospects of its being a brilliant one and if I have your approbation."

"You need have no doubts on that point, my dear fellow, and whatever you can't find in the shops, come to me for. Come, I see you are going to spend a little money. It is a good plan and overcomes many difficulties. In the meanwhile you shall have two footmen, an excellent cook, a housekeeper and whatever other servants you require. The head of my household will pay them and you can settle with him afterwards; he is a trustworthy man. I will come now and then and take a spoonful of soup with you and you shall reward me for what services I may have done you by telling me how things are getting on. I have a great esteem for your charming friend, her discretion is beyond her years and the pledges of love you will obtain of her will doubtless increase your passion and your esteem. Is she aware that I know all?"

"She knows that we are firm friends and she is glad of it, as she is sure that you will be discreet."

"She may count on my discretion. She is really an exquisite woman; I should have been tempted to seduce her myself thirty years ago."

A druggist whom the doctor had recommended to me set out the same day to get ready the baths which were to cure me of my imaginary complaint, and in two days I went myself, after having given Le Duc orders to bring my baggage on.

I was extremely surprised, on entering the apartment I was to occupy, to see a pretty young woman, who came up to me in a modest way to kiss my hand. I stopped her doing so and my astonished air made her blush.

"Do you belong to the household?" I said.

"The ambassador's steward has engaged me as your housekeeper."

"Pardon my surprise. Take me to my room."

She obeyed and, sitting down on the couch, I begged her to sit beside me.

"That is an honour," said she, in the most polite and modest way, "I cannot allow myself. I am only your servant."

"Very good, but, when I am alone, I hope you will consent to take your meals with me, as I don't like eating by myself."

"I will do so, sir."

"Where is your room?"

"This is the one the steward assigned to me, but you have only to speak if you wish me to sleep in another."

"Not at all; it will do very well."

Her room was just behind the recess in which my bed stood. I went in with her and was astonished to see a great display of dresses and in an adjoining closet all the array of the toilette, linen in abundance and a good stock of shoes and embroidered slippers. Dumb with surprise, I looked at her and was thoroughly satisfied with what I saw. Nevertheless I determined to subject her to a close examination, as I thought her manners too interesting and her linen too expensive for her to be a mere servant. All at once I was struck with the idea that it might be a trick of the ambassador's, for a fine woman, well educated and aged twenty-four—or, at the most, twenty-five—years, seemed to me more fitted to be my mistress than my housekeeper. I therefore asked her if she knew the ambassador and what wages she was to receive. She replied that she knew M. de Chavigni only by sight and that the steward had promised her two louis a month and her meals in her own room.

"Where do you come from? What's your name?"

"I come from Lyons; I am a widow and my name is Dubois."

"I am delighted to have you in my service. I shall see you again."

She then left me and I could not help thinking her a very interesting woman, as her speech was as dignified as her appearance. I went down to the kitchen and found the cook, an honest-looking fellow, who told me his name was Rosier. I had known his brother in the service of the French ambassador in Venice. He told me that supper would be ready at nine o'clock.

"I never eat by myself," said I.

"So I hear, sir; and I will serve supper accordingly."

"What are your wages?"

"Four louis a month."

I then went to see the rest of my people. I found two sharp-looking footmen, and the first of them told me he would see I had what wine I wanted. Then I inspected my bath, which seemed convenient. An apothecary was preparing certain matters for my imaginary cure. Finally, I took a walk round my garden and, before going in, went into the gate-keeper's, where I found a numerous family and some girls who were not to be despised. I was delighted to hear everybody speak French and I talked with them some time.

When I got back to my room, I found Le Duc occupied in unpacking my mails, and, telling him to give my linen to Madame Dubois, I went into a pretty cabinet adjoining, where there was a desk and all materials necessary for writing. This closet had only one window facing

north, but it commanded a view capable of inspiring the finest thoughts. I was amusing myself with the contemplation of this sublime prospect, when I heard a knock at my door. It was my pretty housekeeper, who wore a modest and pleasant expression and did not in the least resemble a person who bears a complaint.

"What can I do for you, madame?"

"I hope you will be good enough to order your man to be polite to me?"

"Certainly. How has he failed in politeness?"

"He might possibly tell you 'in no respect.' He wanted to kiss me and, as I refused, he thought himself justified in being rather insolent."

"How?"

"By laughing at me. You will pardon me, sir, but I do not like people who make game."

"You are right; they are sure to be either silly or malicious. Be reassured; Le Duc shall understand that you are to be treated with respect. You will please sup with me."

Le Duc came in soon after and I told him to behave respectfully towards Madame Dubois.

"She's a sly cat," said the rascal. "She wouldn't let me kiss her."

"I am afraid you are a bad fellow."

"Is she your servant or your mistress?"

"Perhaps she's my wife."

"Oh, well, that's different. That's enough; Madame Dubois shall have all respect, and I will try my luck somewhere else."

I had a delicious supper. I was contented with my cook, my butler, my housekeeper and even with my Spaniard, who waited capitally at table.

After supper I sent out Le Duc and the other servant and, as soon as I was alone with my too lovely housekeeper, who had behaved at table like a woman of the world, I begged her to tell me her history.

"My history, sir, is short enough and not very interesting. I was born in Lyons, and my relatives took me to Lausanne, as I have been told, for I was too young at the time to remember anything about it. My father, who was in the service of Madame d'Ermance, left me a half-orphan when I was fourteen. Madame d'Ermance was fond of me and, knowing that my mother's means were small, took me to live with her. I had attained my seventeenth year when I entered the service of Lady Montagu as lady's maid and some time after I was married to Dubois, an old servant of the house. We went to England and three years after my marriage I lost my husband. The climate of England affected my lungs and I was obliged to beg my lady to allow me to leave her service. The worthy lady saw how weak I was and paid the expenses of my journey and loaded me with rich presents. I returned to my mother in Lausanne, where my health soon returned and I went into the service of an English lady, who was very fond of me and would have taken me with her to Italy if she had not conceived some suspicions about the young Duke of Rosebury, with

whom she was in love and whom she thought in love with me. She suspected me, but wrongfully, of being her rival in secret. She sent me away, after giving me rich presents and saying how sorry she was she could not keep me. I went back to my mother and for two years I have lived with the toil of my hands. Four days ago M. Lebel, the ambassador's steward, asked me if I would enter the service of an Italian gentleman as housekeeper. I agreed, in the hope of seeing Italy and this hope was the cause of my stupidity. In short, here I am."

"What 'stupidity' are you referring to?"

"The stupidity of having entered your service before I knew you."

"I like your frankness. You would not have come, then, if you had known me?"

"Certainly not, for no lady will ever take me after having been with you."

"Why not, may I ask?"

"Well, sir, do you think you are the kind of man to have a housekeeper like myself without the public believing my situation to be of quite a different nature?"

"No, you are too pretty and I don't look like a fossil, certainly; but, after all, what matter does it make?"

"It is all very well for you to make light of it and, if I were in your place, I would do the same; but how am I, who am a woman and not in an independent position, to set myself above the rules and regulations of society?"

"You mean, Madame Dubois, that you would very much like to go back to Lausanne?"

"Not exactly, as that would not be just to you."

"How so?"

"People would be sure to say that either your words or your deeds had been too free, and you might possibly pass a rather uncharitable judgment on me."

"What judgment could I pass on you?"

"You might think I wanted to impose on you."

"That might be, as I should be very much hurt by so sudden and uncalled-for a departure. All the same, I am sorry for you, as with your ideas you can neither go nor stay with any satisfaction. Nevertheless, you must do one or the other."

"I have made up my mind. I shall stay and I am almost certain I shall not regret it."

"I am glad to hear that, but there is one point to which I wish to call your attention."

"What is that?"

"I will tell you: let us have no melancholy and no scruples."

"You shall not see me melancholy, I promise you; but kindly explain what you mean by the word 'scruples.'"

"Certainly. In its ordinary acceptation, the word 'scruple' signifies a malicious and superstitious whim, which pronounces guilty an action that may be innocent."

"When a course of action seems doubtful to me, I never look upon the worst side of it. Besides, it is my duty to look after myself and not other people."

"I see you have read a good deal."

"Reading is my greatest luxury. Without books I should find life unbearable."

"Have you any books?"

"A good many. Do you understand English?"

"Not a word."

"I am sorry for that, as the English books would amuse you."

"I do not care for novels."

"Nor do I. But you don't think that there are only novels in English, do you? I like that! Why do you take me for such a lover of the romantic, pray?"

"I like that, too. That pretty outburst is quite to my taste and I am delighted to be the first to make you laugh."

"Pardon me if I laugh, but . . ."

"But me no 'buts,' my dear; laugh away just as you like; you will find that the best way to get along with me. I really think, though, that you put your services at too cheap a rate."

"That makes me laugh again, as it is for you to increase my wages if you like."

"I shall take care that it is done."

I rose from table, not smitten, but surprised, with this young woman, who seemed to be touching my weak spot. She reasoned well and in this first interview she had made a deep impression on me. She was young, pretty, elegant, intellectual and of distinguished manners; I could not guess what would be the end of our connection. I longed to speak to M. Lebel, to thank him for getting me such a marvel and, still more, to ask him some questions about her.

After the supper had been taken away, she came to ask if I would have my hair put in curl papers.

"It's Le Duc's business," I answered, "but if you like, it shall be yours hereafter."

She acquitted herself like an expert.

"I see," said I, "that you are going to serve me as you served Lady Montagu."

"Not altogether; but, as you do not like melancholy, allow me to ask you a favour?"

"Do so, my dear."

"Please do not ask me to give you your bath."

"Upon my honour, I did not think of doing so. It would be scandalous. That's Le Duc's business."

"Pardon me, and allow me to ask another favour."

"Tell me everything you want."

"Allow me to have one of the doorkeeper's daughters to sleep with me."

"If it had come into my head, I would have proposed it to you. Is she in your room now?"

"No."

"Go and call her, then."

"Let us leave that till to-morrow, as, if I went at this time of night, it might make people talk."

"I see you have a store of discretion and you may be sure I will not deprive you of any of it."

She helped me to disrobe and must have found me very modest, but I must say it was not from virtue. My heart was engaged elsewhere and Madame Dubois had impressed me; I was possibly duped by her, but I did not trouble myself to think whether I was or not.

I rang for Le Duc in the morning and, on coming in, he said he had not expected the honour.

"You're a rascal," I said. "Get two cups of chocolate ready directly after I have had my bath."

After I had taken my first cold bath, which I greatly enjoyed, I went to bed again. Madame Dubois came in smiling, dressed in a style of careless elegance.

"You look in good spirits."

"I am because I am happy with you. I have had a good night and there is now in my room a girl as lovely as an angel, who is to sleep with me."

"Call her in."

She called her and a monster of ugliness entered, who made me turn my head away.

"You haven't given yourself a rival, certainly, my dear, but, if she suits you, it is all right. You shall have your breakfast with me and I hope you will take chocolate with me every morning."

"I shall be delighted, as I am very fond of it."

I had a pleasant afternoon. M. de Chavigni spent several hours with me. He was pleased with everything and above all with my fair housekeeper, of whom Lebel had said nothing to him.

"She will be an excellent cure for your love for Madame M—," said he.

"There you are wrong," I answered. "She might make me fall in love with her without any diminution of my affection for my charmer."

Next day, just as I was sitting down to table with my housekeeper, I saw a carriage coming into the courtyard and my detestable lame widow getting out of it. I was terribly put out, but the rules of politeness compelled me to go and receive her.

"I was far from anticipating that you would do me so great an honour, madame."

"I daresay; I have come to dine with you and to ask you to do me a favour."

"Come in, then, dinner is just being served. I beg to introduce Madame Dubois to you."

I turned towards my charming housekeeper and told her that the lady would dine with us.

Madame Dubois, in the character of mistress of the house, did the honours admirably and my lame friend, in spite of her pride, was very polite to her. I did not speak a dozen words during the meal and paid no sort of attention to the detestable creature, but I was anxious to know what she could want me to do for her. As soon as Madame Dubois had left the room, she told me straight out that she had come to ask me to let her have a couple of rooms in my house for three weeks or a month at the most.

I was astonished at such a piece of impudence and told her she asked more than I was at liberty to give.

"You can't refuse me, as everybody knows I have come on purpose to ask you."

"Then everybody must know that I have refused you. I want to be alone—absolutely alone, without any kind of restriction on my liberty. The least suspicion of company would bore me."

"I shall not bore you in any way and you will be at perfect liberty to ignore my presence. I shall not be offended if you don't inquire after me, and I shall not ask after you—even if you are ill. I shall have my meals served to me by my own servant and I shall take care not to walk in the garden unless I am perfectly certain you are not there. You must allow that, if you have any claims to politeness, you cannot refuse me."

"If you were acquainted with the most ordinary rules of politeness, madame, you would not persist in a request to which I have formally declined to accede."

She did not answer, but my words had evidently produced no effect. I was choking with rage. I strode up and down the room and felt inclined to send her away by force as a madwoman. However, I reflected that she had relatives in a good position, whom I might offend if I treated her roughly, and that I might make an enemy capable of exacting a terrible revenge; and, finally, that Madame M— might disapprove of my using violence on this hideous harpy.

"Well, madame," said I, "you shall have the apartment you have solicited with so much importunity and, an hour after you come in, I shall be on my way back to Soleure."

"I accept the apartment and I shall occupy it the day after tomorrow. As for your threat of returning to Soleure, it is an idle one, as you would thereby make yourself the laughing-stock of the whole town."

With this final impertinence she rose and went away, without taking any further notice of me. I let her go without moving from my seat. I was stupefied. I repented of having given in; such impudence was unparalleled. I called myself a fool and vowed I deserved to be publicly hooted. I ought to have taken the whole thing as a jest, to have contrived to get her out of the house on some pretext and then to have

sent her about her business as a madwoman, calling all my servants as witnesses.

My dear Dubois came in and I told my tale. She was thunderstruck.

"I can hardly credit her requesting, or your granting, such a thing," said she, "unless you have some motives of your own."

I saw the force of her argument and, not wishing to make a confidante of her, held my tongue and went out to work off my bile.

I came in tired, after taking a stiff walk. I took supper with Madame Dubois and we sat at table till midnight. Her conversation pleased me more and more; her mind was well furnished, her speech elegant and she told her stories and cracked her jokes with charming grace. She was devoid of prejudices, but by no means devoid of principle. Her discretion was rather the result of system than of virtue; but, if she had not had a virtuous spirit, her system would not have shielded her from the storms of passion or the seductions of vice.

My encounter with the impudent widow had so affected me that I could not resist going at an early hour on the following day to communicate it to M. de Chavigni. I warned Madame Dubois that, if I were not back by dinner-time, she was not to wait for me.

M. de Chavigni had been told by my enemy that she was going to pay me a visit, but he roared with laughter on hearing the steps she had taken to gain her ends.

"Your Excellency may find it very funny," said I, "but I don't."

"So I see; but take my advice and be the first to laugh at the adventure. Behave as if you were unaware of her presence and that will be a sufficient punishment for her. People will soon say she is smitten with you and you disdain her love. Go and tell the story to M. M—and stay without ceremony to dinner. I have spoken to Lebel about your pretty housekeeper; the worthy man had no malicious intent in sending her to you. He happened to be going to Lausanne and just before I had told him to find you a good housekeeper; thinking it over on his way, he remembered his friend Madame Dubois and the matter was thus arranged without malice prepense. She is a regular find, a perfect jewel for you and, if you get taken with her, I don't think she will allow you to languish for long."

"I don't know; she seems to be a woman of principle."

"I shouldn't have thought you would be taken in by that sort of thing. I will ask you both to give me a dinner to-morrow and shall be glad to hear her chatter."

M. M— welcomed me most kindly and congratulated me on my conquest, which would make my country house a paradise. I joined in the jest, of course, with the more ease that his charming wife, though I could see that she suspected the truth, added her congratulations to those of her husband; but I soon changed the course of their friendly mirth by telling them the circumstances of the case. They were indignant enough then and the husband said that, if she had really quartered herself on me in that fashion, all I had to do was to get an

injunction from the courts forbidding her to put her foot within my doors.

"I don't want to do that," said I, "as, besides publicly disgracing her, I should be showing my own weakness and proclaiming that I was not the master in my own house and could not prevent her establishing herself with me."

"I think so, too," said the wife, "and I am glad you gave way to her. That shows how polite you are and I shall go and call on her to congratulate her on the welcome she got, as she told me that her plans had succeeded."

Here the matter ended and I accepted their invitation to dine with them. I behaved as a friend, but with that subtle politeness which takes away all ground for suspicion; accordingly, the husband felt no alarm. My charmer found the opportunity to tell me that I had done wisely in yielding to the ill-timed demand of that harpy and that, as soon as M. de Chauvelin, whom they were expecting, had gone away again, I could ask her husband to spend a few days with me, and that she would doubtless come too.

"Your doorkeeper's wife," she added, "was my nurse. I have been kind to her and, when necessary, I can write to you by her without running any risk."

After calling on two Italian Jesuits who were passing through Soleure, and inviting them to dine with me on the following day, I returned home, where the amiable Dubois amused me till midnight by philosophical discussions. She admired Locke and maintained that the faculty of thought was not a proof of the existence of spirit in us, as it was in the power of God to endow matter with the capacity for thought. I was unable to controvert this position. She made me laugh by saying that there was a great difference between thinking and reasoning, and I had the courage to say, "I think you would reason well if you let yourself be persuaded to sleep with me, and you think you reason well in refusing to be so persuaded."

"Trust me, sir," said she. "There is as much difference between the reasoning powers of men and women as there is between their physical characteristics."

Next morning at nine o'clock we were taking our chocolate when my enemy arrived. I heard her carriage but did not take the slightest notice. The villainous woman sent away the carriage and installed herself in her room with her maid.

I had sent Le Duc to Soleure for my letters, so I was obliged to beg my housekeeper to do my hair, and she did it admirably, as I told her we should have the ambassador and the two Jesuits to dinner. I thanked her and kissed her for the first time on the cheek, as she would not allow me to touch her beautiful lips. I felt that we were fast falling in love with one another, but we continued to keep ourselves under control, a task which was much easier for her than for me, as she was helped by that spirit of coquetry natural to the fair sex, which often has greater power over them than love itself.

M. de Chavigni came at two; I had consulted him before asking the Jesuits and had sent my carriage for them. While we were waiting for these gentlemen, we took a turn in the garden and M. de Chavigni begged my fair housekeeper to join us as soon as she had discharged certain petty duties in which she was then engaged.

M. de Chavigni was one of those men who were sent by France to such powers as she wished to cajole and to win over to her interests. M. de l'Hôpital, who knew how to gain the heart of Elizabeth Petrovna, was another; the Duc de Nivernois, who did what he liked with the Court of St. James's in 1762, is a third instance.

Madame Dubois came out to us in due course and entertained us very agreeably, and M. de Chavigni told me he considered she had all the qualities which would make a man happy. At dinner she enchanted him and captivated the two Jesuits by her delicate and subtle wit. In the evening this delightful old nobleman told me he had spent a most pleasant day and, after asking me to dine at his house while M. de Chauvelin was there, he left me with an effusive embrace.

M. de Chauvelin, whom I had had the honour to know at Versailles, at M. de Choiseul's, was an extremely pleasant man. He arrived at Soleure in the course of two days and, M. de Chavigni having advised me of his presence, I hastened to pay my court to him. He remembered me and introduced me to his wife, whom I had not the honour of knowing. As chance placed me next to my charmer at table, my spirits rose and my numerous jests and stories put everybody in a good temper. On M. de Chauvelin remarking that he knew some pleasant stories of which I was the hero, M. de Chavigni told him that he did not know the best of all and recounted to him my adventure at Zurich. M. de Chauvelin then told Madame M— that, to serve her, he would willingly transform himself into a footman, on which M. M— joined in and said that I had a finer taste for beauty, as she for whose sake I had made myself into a waiter was at that moment a guest of mine in my country house.

"Ah, indeed!" said M. de Chauvelin. "Then we must come and see your quarters, M. Casanova."

I was going to reply when M. de Chavigni anticipated me by saying, "Yes, indeed! and I hope he will lend me his beautiful hall to give you a ball next Sunday."

In this manner the good-natured courtier prevented me from promising to give a ball myself and relieved me of my foolish boast, which I should have been wrong in carrying out, as it would have been an encroachment on his privilege as ambassador of entertaining these distinguished strangers during the five or six days they might stay at Soleure. Besides, if I had kept to my word, it would have involved me in a considerable expense, which would not have helped me in my suit.

The conversation turning on Voltaire, the *Ecossaise* was mentioned and the acting of my neighbour was highly commended in words that made her blush and shine in her beauty like a star, whereat her praises were renewed

After dinner the ambassador invited us to his ball on the day after the morrow and I went home more deeply in love than ever with my dear charmer, whom Heaven had designed to inflict on me the greatest grief I have had in my life, as the reader shall see.

I found that my housekeeper had gone to bed and I was glad of it, for the presence of my fair one had excited my passions to such an extent that my reason might have failed to keep me within the bounds of respect. Next morning she found me sad and rallied me in such a way that I soon recovered my spirits. While we were taking our chocolate, the lame creature's maid brought me a note and I sent her away, telling her that I would send the answer by my own servant. This curious letter ran as follows:

"The ambassador has asked me to his ball on Sunday. I answered that I was not well, but, if I found myself better in the evening, I would come. I think that, as I am staying in your house, I ought to be introduced by you or stay away altogether. So, if you do not wish to oblige me by taking me, I must beg of you to tell the ambassador that I am ill. Pardon me if I have taken the liberty of infringing our agreement in this peculiar instance, but it is a question of keeping up some sort of appearance in public."

"Not so," I cried, mad with rage, and, taking my pen, I wrote thus:

"I think your idea is a beautiful one, madame. You will have to be ill, as I mean to keep to the conditions you made yourself and to enjoy full liberty in all things, and I shall therefore deny myself the honour of taking you to the ball which the ambassador is to give in my hall."

I read her insolent letter and my reply to my housekeeper, who thought the answer just what she deserved. I then sent it to her.

I passed the next two days quietly and agreeably without going out or seeing any visitors, but the society of Madame Dubois was all-sufficient for me. Early on Sunday morning the ambassador's people came to make the necessary preparations for the ball and supper. Lebel came to pay me his respects while I was at table. I made him sit down, while I thanked him for procuring me a housekeeper who was all perfection.

Lebel was a fine man, middle-aged, witty and an excellent steward, though perfectly honest.

"Which of you two," said he to me, "is the more caught?"

"We are equally pleased with each other," answered my charming housekeeper.

To my great delight, the first pair to appear were M. and Madame M—. She was extremely polite to Madame Dubois and did not show the slightest astonishment when I introduced her as my housekeeper. She told me that I must take her to see her lame friend and, to my great disgust, I had to go. We were received with a show of great friendship and she went out with us into the garden, taking M. M—'s arm, while his wife leant amorously on mine.

When we had made a few turns of the garden, Madame M— begged

me to take her to her nurse. As her husband was close by, I said, "Who is your nurse?"

"Your doorkeeper's wife," said her husband. "We will wait for you in this lady's apartment."

"Tell me, sweetheart," said she on the way, "does not your pretty housekeeper sleep with you?"

"I swear she does not; I can love only you."

"I would like to believe you, but I find it hard to do so; however, if you are speaking the truth, it is wrong of you to keep her in the house, as nobody will believe in your innocence."

"It is enough for me that you believe in it. I admire her and at any other time I suppose we could not sleep under the same roof without sleeping in the same bed; but now that you rule my heart, I am not capable of a passion for her."

"I am delighted to hear it; but I think she is very pretty."

We went in to see her nurse, who called her "my child" and kissed her again and again and then left us alone, to prepare some lemonade for us. As soon as we found ourselves alone, our mouths were glued together and my hands touched a thousand beauties, covered only by a dress of light sarcenet; but I was not able to enjoy her charms without this cruel robe, which was all the worse because it did not conceal the loveliness beneath it. I am sure that the good nurse would have kept us waiting a long time if she had known how we longed to be left alone for a few moments longer; but, alas! the celerity with which she made those two glasses of lemonade was unexampled.

"It was made beforehand, was it?" said I, when I saw her coming in.

"Not at all, sir; but I am a quick hand."

"You are, indeed."

These words made my charmer go off into a peal of laughter, which she accompanied with a significant glance in my direction. As we were going away, she said that, as things seemed to be against us, we must wait till her husband came to spend a few days with me.

My terrible enemy gave us some sweets, which she praised very highly, and above all some quince marmalade, which she insisted on our tasting. We begged to be excused and Madame M— pressed my foot with hers. When we had got away, she told me I had been very wise not to touch anything, as the widow was suspected of having poisoned her husband.

The ball, the supper, the refreshments and the guests were all of the most exquisite and agreeable kind. I danced only one minuet with Madame de Chauvelin, nearly all my evening being taken up with talking to her husband. I made him a present of my translation of his poem on the *Seven Deadly Sins*, which he received with much pleasure.

"I intend," said I, "to pay you a visit at Turin."

"Are you going to bring your housekeeper with you?"

"No."

"You make a mistake, for she is a delightful person."

Everybody spoke of my dear Dubois in the same way. She had a

perfect knowledge of the rules of good breeding and knew how to make herself respected without being guilty of the slightest presumption. In vain she was urged to dance, and she afterwards told me that, if she had yielded, she would have become an object of hatred to all the ladies. She knew that she could dance exquisitely.

M. de Chauvelin went away in two days and towards the end of the week I heard from Madame d'Urfé, who told me that she had spent two days at Versailles in furtherance of my desires. She sent me a copy of the letters of pardon signed by the King in favour of the relative of M. M—, assuring me that the original had been sent to the colonel of his regiment, where he would be reinstated in the rank which he held before the duel.

I had my horses put into my carriage and hastened to carry this good news to M. de Chavigni. I was wild with joy and did not conceal it from the ambassador, who congratulated me, since M. M—, having obtained by me, without the expenditure of a penny, a favour which would have cost him dear if he had succeeded in purchasing it, would henceforth be only too happy to treat me with the utmost confidence.

To make the matter still more important, I begged my noble friend to announce the pardon to M. M— in person, and he immediately wrote a note to that gentleman requesting his presence.

As soon as he made his appearance, the ambassador handed him the copy of the pardon, telling him that he owed it all to me. The worthy man was in an ecstasy and asked what he owed me.

"Nothing, sir, unless you will give me your friendship, which I value more than all the gold in the world; and, if you would give me a proof of your friendship, come and spend a few days with me; I am positively dying of loneliness. The matter I have done for you is a mere trifle; you see how quickly it has been arranged."

"A mere trifle! I have devoted a year's labour to it; I have moved heaven and earth without succeeding, and in a fortnight you have accomplished it. Sir, you may dispose of my life."

"Embrace me and come and see me. I am the happiest of men when I am enabled to serve persons of your merit."

"I will go and tell the good news to my wife, who will love you as well as I do."

"Yes, do so," said the ambassador, "and bring her to dinner here to-morrow."

When we were alone together, the Marquis de Chavigni, an old courtier and a wit, began to make some very philosophical reflections on the state of a court where nothing can be said to be easy or difficult *per se*, as the one at a moment's notice may become the other; a court where justice often pleads in vain, while interest or even importunity gets a ready hearing. He had known Madame d'Urfé, had even paid his court to her at the period when she was secretly beloved by the regent. He it was who had given her the name of *Egeria*, because she said she had a genius who directed her and passed the nights with her when she slept

by herself. The ambassador then spoke of M. M—, who had undoubtedly become a very great friend of mine.

"The only way to blind a jealous husband," said he, "is to make him your friend, for friendship will rarely admit jealousy."

The next day at dinner at the ambassador's, Madame M— gave me a thousand proofs of grateful friendship, which my heart interpreted as pledges of love. The husband and wife promised to pay me a three days' visit in the following week at my country house.

They kept their word without giving me any further warning, but I was not taken by surprise, as I had made all preparations for their reception.

My heart leapt with joy on seeing my charmer getting down from the carriage, but my joy was not unalloyed, as the husband told me that they must absolutely return on the fourth day, and the wife insisted on the horrible widow being present at all our conversations.

I took my guests to the suite of rooms I had prepared for them and which I judged most suitable for my designs. It was on the ground floor, opposite to my room. The bedroom had a recess with two beds, separated by a partition through which one passed by a door. I had the key to all the doors and the maid would sleep in a closet beyond the ante-chamber.

In obedience to my divinity's commands, we went and called on the widow, who gave us a cordial welcome, but, under the pretext of leaving us in freedom, refused to be of our company during the three days. However, she gave in when I told her that our agreement was in force only when I was alone.

My dear Dubois, with her knowledge of the rules of society, did not need a hint to have her supper in her room, and we had an exquisite meal, as I had given orders that the fare should be of the best. After supper I took my guests to their apartment and felt obliged to do the same by the widow. She wanted me to be present at her *toilette de nuit*, but I excused myself with a bow. She said, maliciously, that, after all the pains I had taken, I deserved to be successful. I gave her no answer.

Next morning, as we were walking in the garden, I warned my charmer that I had all the keys of the house and could introduce myself into her room at any moment.

"I am expecting a visit from my husband to-night," said she, "for he has led up to it with the caresses which are usual with him. We must therefore wait till to-morrow night, which will take away all risk, as I have never known him to come to me two nights in succession."

About noon we had a visit from M. de Chavigni, who invited himself to dinner and made a great to-do when he heard that my housekeeper dined in her room. The ladies said he was quite right, so we all went and made her sit down at table with us. She must have been flattered and the incident evidently increased her good humour, as she amused us by her wit and her piquant stories about Lady Montagu. When we had risen from table, Madame M— said to me, "You really must be in love with that young woman; she is ravishing."

"If I could pass two hours in your company to-night, I would prove to you that I am yours alone."

"It is still out of the question, as my husband has ascertained that the moon changes to-day."

"He has to ask leave of the moon, has he, before discharging a sweet duty?"

"Exactly. According to his system of astrology, it is the only way to keep his health and to have the son that Heaven wills to grant him—and, indeed, without aid from above it is hardly likely that his wishes will be accomplished."

"I hope to be the instrument of Heaven," said I, laughing.

"I only hope you may."

Thus I was obliged to wait. Next morning, as we were walking in the garden, she said to me:

"The sacrifice to the moon has been performed and, to make sure, I will cause him to renew his caresses to-night as soon as we go to bed; and after that he is certain to sleep soundly. You can come at an hour after midnight; love will await you."

Certain of my bliss, I gave myself up to the joy that such a certainty kindles in a fiery heart. It was the only night remaining, as M. M— had decided that on the next day they would return to Soleure.

After supper I took the ladies to their apartments and, on returning, told my housekeeper that I had a good deal of writing to do and that she could go to bed.

Just before one o'clock I left my room and, the night being a dark one, I had to feel my way half round my house and to my surprise found the door open, but I did not pay any attention to this circumstance. I opened the door of the second ante-chamber and, the moment I shut it again, a hand seized mine, whilst another closed my lips. I heard only a whispered "Hush!" which bade me be silent. A sofa was at hand; we made it our altar of sacrifice. It was summer time and I had only two hours before me, so I did not waste a moment, and, thinking I held in my arms the woman I had so long sighed for, I renewed again and again the pledges of my ardent love. In the fulness of my bliss I thought that her not awaiting me in her bed had been an admirable idea, as we might have awakened the troublesome husband. Her tender ecstasies equalled mine and increased my bliss by making me believe (oh, fatal error!) that of all my conquests this was the one of which I had most reason to boast.

To my great grief the clock warned me that it was time for me to be gone. I covered her with the tenderest kisses, and, returning to my room in the greatest gladness, I resigned myself to sleep.

I was roused at nine o'clock by M. M—. who seemed in a happy frame of mind and showed me a letter he had just received, in which his relative thanked me for restoring him to his regiment. In this letter, which was dictated by gratitude, he spoke of me as if I had been a divinity.

"I am delighted," I said, "to have been of service to you."

"And I," said he, "am equally pleased to assure you of my gratitude. Come and breakfast with us, my wife is still at her toilette. Come along."

I rose hastily and, just as I was leaving the room, I saw the dreadful widow, who seemed full of glee and said:

"I thank you, sir; I thank you with all my heart. I beg to leave you at liberty again; I am going back to Soleure."

"Wait for a quarter of an hour, we are going to breakfast with Madame M—."

"I can't stop a moment; I have just wished her 'good day' and now I must be gone. Farewell, and remember me."

"Farewell, madame."

She had hardly gone before M. M— asked me if the woman was beside herself.

"One might think so, certainly," I replied, "for she has received nothing but politeness at my hands and I think she might have waited to go back with you in the evening."

We went to breakfast and to discuss this abrupt leave-taking, and afterwards we took a turn in the garden, where we found Madame Dubois. M. M— took possession of her; and, as I thought his wife looking rather downcast, I asked her if she had not slept well.

"I did not go to sleep till four o'clock this morning," she replied, "after vainly sitting up in bed waiting for you till that time. What unforeseen accident prevented your coming?"

I could not answer her question. I was petrified. I looked at her fixedly without replying; I could not shake off my astonishment. At last a dreadful suspicion came into my head that I had held within my arms for two hours the horrible monster whom I had foolishly received into my house. I was seized with a terrible tremor, which obliged me to go and take shelter behind the arbour and hide my emotion. I felt as though I should swoon away. I should certainly have fallen if I had not rested my head against a tree.

My first idea had been a fearful thought, which I hastened to repel, that Madame M— having enjoyed me, wished to deny all knowledge of the fact—a device which it is in the power of any woman to adopt, who gives up her person in the dark, as it is impossible to convict her of lying. However, I knew the divine creature I thought I had possessed too well to believe her capable of such base deceit. I felt that she would have been lacking in delicacy if she had said, by way of a jest, that she had waited for me in vain, as in such a case as this the least doubt is a degradation. I was forced, then, to the conclusion that she had been supplanted by the infernal widow. How had the creature managed it? How had she ascertained our arrangements? I could not imagine, and I bewildered myself with painful surmises. Reason comes to the aid of the mind only when the confusion produced by painful thoughts has almost vanished. I concluded, then, that I had spent two hours with this abominable monster; and what increased my anguish and made me loathe and despise myself still more was that I could not

help confessing that I had been perfectly happy. It was an unpardonable mistake, as the two women differed as much as white does from black, and, though the darkness forbade my seeing and the silence my hearing, my sense of touch should have enlightened me—after the first set-to, at all events—but my imagination was in a state of ecstasy. I cursed love, my nature and, above all, the inconceivable weakness which had allowed me to receive into my house the serpent that had deprived me of an angel and made me hate myself at the thought of having defiled myself with her. I resolved to die, after having torn to pieces with my own hands the monster who had made me so unhappy.

While I was strengthening myself in this resolution, M. M— came up and asked me kindly if I were ill; he was alarmed to see me pale and covered with drops of sweat. "My wife," said the worthy man, "is uneasy about you and sent me to look after you." I told him I had had to leave her on account of a sudden dizziness, but that I was beginning to feel better. "Let us rejoin her." Madame Dubois brought me a flask of strong waters, saying teasingly that she was sure it was only the sudden departure of the widow that had put me out.

We continued our walk and, when we were far enough from the husband, who was with my housekeeper, I said I had been overcome by what she had said, but that it had doubtless been spoken jestingly.

"I was not jesting at all," said she, with a sigh. "Tell me what prevented your coming."

Again I was struck dumb. I could not make up my mind to tell her the story and I did not know what to say to justify myself. I was silent and embarrassed when my housekeeper's little servant came up and gave me a letter which the wretched widow had sent her by an express. She had opened it and found an enclosure addressed to me inside. I put it in my pocket, saying I would read it at my leisure. On Madame M— saying in joke that it was a love letter, I could not laugh and made no answer. The servant came to tell us that dinner was served, but I could touch nothing. My abstinence was put down to my being unwell.

I longed to read the letter, but wished to be alone to do so and that was a difficult matter to contrive.

Wishing to avoid the game of piquet which formed our usual afternoon's amusement, I took a cup of coffee and said that I thought the fresh air would do me good. Madame M— seconded me and, guessing what I wanted, she asked me to walk up and down with her in a sheltered alley in the garden. I offered her my arm, her husband offered his to my housekeeper and we went out.

As soon as my mistress saw that we were free from observation, she spoke as follows:

"I am sure that you spent the night with that malicious woman, and I am afraid of being compromised in consequence. Tell me everything; confide in me without reserve; this is my first intrigue and, if it is to serve as a lesson, you should conceal nothing from me. I am sure you loved me once; tell me that you have not become my enemy."

"Good heavens! what are you saying? I, your enemy!"

"Then tell me all and before you read that wretched creature's letter. I adjure you in the name of love to hide nothing from me."

"Well, divine creature, I will do as you bid me. I came to your apartment at one o'clock and, as soon as I was in the second ante-chamber, I was taken by the arm and a hand was placed upon my lips to impose silence; I thought I held you in my arms and I laid you gently on the sofa. You must remember that I felt absolutely certain it was you; indeed, I can scarcely doubt it even now. I then passed with you, without a word being spoken, two of the most delicious hours I have ever experienced. Cursed hours! of which the remembrance will torment me for the remainder of my days. I left you at a quarter past three. The rest is known to you."

"Who can have told the monster that you were going to visit me at that hour?"

"I can't make out, and that perplexes me."

"You must confess that I am the most to be pitied of us three, and perhaps, alas! the only one who may have a just title to the name of 'wretched'."

"If you love me, in the name of Heaven do not say that; I have resolved to stab her and to kill myself after having inflicted on her that punishment she so well deserves."

"Have you considered that the publicity of such an action would render me the most unfortunate of women? Let us be more moderate, sweetheart. You are not to blame for what has happened and, if possible, I love you all the more. Give me the letter she has written to you. I will go away from you to read it and you can read it afterwards, as, if we were seen reading it together, we should have to explain matters."

"Here it is."

I then rejoined her husband, whom my housekeeper was sending into fits of laughter. The conversation I had just had had calmed me a little and the trustful way in which she had asked for the letter had done me good. I was in a fever to know the contents and yet I dreaded to read it, as it could only increase my rage and I was afraid of the results.

Madame M— rejoined us and, after we had separated again, she gave me the letter, telling me to keep it till I was alone. She asked me to give her my word of honour to do nothing without consulting her and to communicate all my designs to her by means of her nurse.

"We need not fear the harpy saying anything about it," she remarked, "as she would first have to proclaim her own prostitution, and, as for us, concealment is the best plan. And I would have you note that the horrible creature gives you a piece of advice you would do well to follow."

What completely tore my heart asunder during this interview was to see great tears, tears of love and grief, falling from her beautiful eyes, though, to moderate my anguish, she forced a smile. I knew too well the importance she attached to her fair name not to guess that she

was tormented with the idea that the terrible widow knew of the understanding between us, and the thought added fresh poignancy to my sorrow.

This amiable pair left me at seven in the evening and I thanked the husband in such a manner that he could not doubt my sincerity, and, in truth, I said no more than I felt. There is no reason why the love one feels for a woman should hinder one from being the true friend of her husband, if she have a husband. The contrary view is hateful prejudice, repugnant both to nature and to philosophy. After I had embraced him, I was about to kiss the hand of his charming wife, but he begged me to embrace her, too, which I did respectfully but feelingly.

I was impatient to read the terrible letter and, as soon as they were gone, I shut myself up in my room to prevent any interruptions. The epistle was as follows:

"I leave your house, sir, rather well pleased, not that I have spent a couple of hours with you, for you are no better than any other man, but that I have revenged myself for the many open marks of contempt you have given me; for your private scorn I care little and I willingly forgive you. I have avenged myself by unmasking your designs and the hypocrisy of your pretty prude, who will no longer be able to treat me with that irritating air of superiority which she, affecting a virtue which she does not possess, has displayed towards me. I have avenged myself in the fact that she must have been waiting for you all the night, and I would have given worlds to have heard the amusing conversation you must have had when she found out that I had taken, for vengeance' sake, and not for love, the enjoyment which was meant for her. I have avenged myself because you can no longer pretend to think her a marvel of beauty, as, having mistaken me for her, the difference between us must needs be slight; but I have done you a service, too, as the thought of what has happened should cure you of your passion. You will no longer adore her before all other women, who are just as good as she. Thus I have disabused you and you ought to feel grateful to me; but I dispense you from all gratitude and do not care if you choose to hate me, provided your hatred leaves me in peace; but, if I find your conduct objectionable in the future, I warn you that I will tell all, since I do not care for my own reputation, as I am a widow and mistress of my own actions. I need no man's favour and care not what men may say of me. Your mistress, on the other hand, is in quite a different position.

"And here I will give you a piece of advice, which should convince you of my generosity. For the last ten years I have been troubled with a little ailment which has resisted all attempts at treatment. You exerted yourself to such an extent to prove how well you loved me that you must have caught the complaint. I advise you, then, to put yourself under treatment at once to weaken the force of the virus; but, above all, do not communicate it to your mistress, who might chance to hand it on to her husband and possibly to others, which

would make a wretched woman of her, to my grief and sorrow, since she has never done me any harm. I felt certain that you two would deceive the worthy husband and I wished to have proof; thus I made you take me in, and the position of the apartment you gave them was enough to remove all doubts; still, I wanted to have proof positive. I had no need of any help to arrive at my ends and I found it a pleasant joke to keep you in the dark. After passing two nights on the sofa all for nothing, I resolved on passing the third night there, and my perseverance was crowned with success. No one saw me, and my maid even is ignorant of my nocturnal wanderings, though in any case she is accustomed to observe silence. You are, then, at perfect liberty to bury the story in oblivion and I advise you to do so.

"If you need a doctor, tell him to keep his counsel, for people at Soleure know of my little indisposition and they might say you caught it from me and this would do us both harm."

Her impudence struck me as so gigantic in its dimensions that I almost laughed. I was perfectly aware that, after the way I had treated her, she must hate me, but I should not have thought she would have carried her perverse hatred so far. She had communicated to me an infectious disease, though I did not so far feel any symptoms; however, they would no doubt appear and I sadly thought I should have to go away to be cured, to avoid the gossip of malicious wits. I gave myself up to reflection and after two hours' thought wisely resolved to hold my tongue, but to be revenged when the opportunity presented itself.

I had eaten nothing at dinner and needed a good supper to make me sleep. I sat down to table with my housekeeper, but, like a man ashamed of himself, I dared not look her in the face.

CHAPTER 71

WHEN the servants had gone away and left us alone, it would have looked strange if we had remained as dumb as two posts, but in my state of mind I did not feel capable of breaking the silence. My dear Dubois, who began to love me because I made her happy, felt my melancholy react on herself and tried to make me talk.

"Your sadness," said she, "is not like you; it frightens me. You could console yourself by telling me of your troubles, but do not imagine that my curiosity springs from any unworthy motive; I want only to be of service to you. You may rely on my being perfectly discreet; and, to encourage you to speak freely and to give you that trust in me which I think I deserve, I will tell you what I know and what I have learnt about yourself. My knowledge has not been obtained by any unworthy stratagems or through curiosity in affairs which do not concern me."

"I am pleased with what you say, my dear housekeeper. I see you are

my friend and I am grateful to you. Tell me all you know about the matter which is now troubling me, and conceal nothing."

"Very good. You are the lover and the beloved of Madame M—. The widow whom you treated badly has played you some trick which has involved you with your mistress, and then the wretched woman has left your house with the most unpardonable rudeness; this tortures you. You fear some disastrous consequences from which you cannot escape, your heart and mind are at war and there is a struggle in your breast between passion and sentiment. Perhaps I am wrong, but yesterday you seemed to me happy and to-day miserable. I pity you, because you have inspired me with the tenderest feelings of friendship. I did my best to-day to converse with the husband, that you might be free to talk to the wife, who seems to me well worthy of your love."

"All you have said is true. Your friendship is dear to me and I have a high opinion of your intellectual powers. The widow is a monster who has made me wretched in return for my contempt, and I cannot revenge myself on her. Honour will not allow me to tell you any more and, indeed, it would be impossible for you or anyone else to alleviate the grief that overwhelms me. It may possibly be my death, but in the meantime, my dear Dubois, I entreat you to continue your friendship towards me and to treat me with entire candour. I shall always listen to what you say and thus you will be of the greatest service to me. I shall not be ungrateful."

I spent a weary night, as I had expected, for anger, the mother of vengeance, has always made me sleepless, while sudden happiness has had sometimes the same effect.

I rang for Le Duc in the morning, but, instead of him, Madame Dubois's ugly little attendant came and told me that my man was ill and that the housekeeper would bring me my chocolate. She came in directly after and I had no sooner swallowed the chocolate than I was seized with a violent attack of sickness, the effect of anger, which at its height may kill the man who cannot satisfy it. My concentrated rage called for vengeance on the dreadful widow, the chocolate came on the top of the anger and, if it had not been rejected, I should have been killed; as it was, I was quite exhausted. Looking at my housekeeper, I saw she was in tears and I asked why she wept.

"Good heavens! Do you think I have a heart of stone?"

"Calm yourself; I see you pity me. Leave me, and I hope I shall be able to get some sleep."

I went to sleep soon after and did not wake till I had slept for seven hours. I felt restored to life. I rang the bell, my housekeeper came in and told me the surgeon of the place had called. She looked very melancholy, but, on seeing my more cheerful aspect, I saw gladness reappearing on her pretty face.

"We will dine together, dearest," said I, "but tell the surgeon to come in. I want to know what he has to say to me."

The worthy man entered and, after looking carefully round the

room to see that we were alone, he came up to me and whispered in my ear that Le Duc had a malady of a shameful character.

I burst out laughing, as I had been expecting some terrible news.

"My dear doctor," said I, "do all you can to cure him and I will pay you handsomely, but next time don't look so doleful when you have anything to tell me. How old are you?"

"Nearly eighty."

"May God help you!"

I was all the more ready to sympathise with my poor Spaniard, as I expected to find myself in a like case. What a fellow feeling there is between the unfortunate! The poor man will seek in vain for true compassion at the rich man's doors; what he receives is as a sacrifice to ostentation, and not true benevolence; and the man in sorrow should not look for pity from one to whom sorrow is unknown, if there be such a person on earth.

My housekeeper came in to dress me and asked me what had been the doctor's business.

"He must have said something amusing to make you laugh."

"Yes, and I should like to tell you what it was; but, before I do so, I must ask you if you know what the disease of Venus is."

"Yes, I do; Lady Montagu's footman died of it while I was with her."

"Very good; but you should pretend not to know what it is, and imitate other ladies who assume an ignorance which well becomes them. Poor Le Duc has got this disease."

"Poor fellow, I am sorry for him! Were you laughing at that?"

"No; it was the air of mystery assumed by the old doctor which amused me."

"I, too, have a confidence to make and, when you have heard it, you must either forgive me or send me away directly."

"Here is another bother. What the devil can you have done? Quick! tell me."

"Sir, I have robbed you!"

"What! Robbed me? When? How? Can you return to me what you have taken? I should not have thought you capable of such a thing. I never forgive a robber or a liar."

"You are too hasty, sir. I am sure you will forgive me, as I robbed you only half an hour ago and I am now going to return you the object of my theft."

"You are a singular woman, my dear. Come, I will vouchsafe full forgiveness, but restore immediately what you have taken."

"This is what I stole."

"What! That monster's letter? Did you read it?"

"Yes, of course, for otherwise I should not have committed a theft, should I?"

"You have robbed me of my secret, then, and that is a thing you cannot give me back. You have done very wrong."

"I confess I have. My theft is all the greater in that I cannot make

restoration. Nevertheless, I promise never to speak a word of it all my life and that ought to gain me my pardon. Give it to me quickly."

"You are a little witch. I forgive you and here is the pledge of my mercy." So saying, I fastened my lips on hers.

"I don't doubt the validity of your pardon; you have signed with a double and a triple seal."

"Yes; but in future do not read, or so much as touch, any of my papers, as I am the depositary of secrets of which I am not free to dispose."

"Very good; but what shall I do when I find papers astray, as that letter was?"

"You must pick them up, but not read them."

"I promise to do so."

"Very well, my dear; but you must forget the horrors you have read."

"Listen to me. Allow me to remember what I have read; perhaps you may be the gainer. Let us talk over this affair, which has made my hair stand on end. This monster of immodesty has given you two mortal blows, one in the body and one in the soul; but that is not the worst, as she thinks that Madame M—'s honour is in her keeping. This, in my thinking, is the worst of all; for, in spite of the affront, your mutual love should continue and the disease which the infamous creature has communicated to you will pass off; but, if the malicious woman carries out her threats, the honour of your charming mistress is gone beyond return. Do not try to make me forget the matter, then, but let us talk it over and see what can be done."

I thought I was dreaming when I heard a young woman in her position reasoning with more acuteness than Minerva displays in her colloquies with Telemachus. She had captured, not only my esteem, but my respect.

"Yes, my dear," I answered, "let us think over some plan for delivering from this imminent danger a woman who deserves the respect of all good men; and the very thought that we have some chance of success makes me indebted to you. Let us think of it and talk of it from noon to night. Think kindly of Madame M—, pardon her first slip, protect her honour and have pity on my distress. From henceforth call me no more your master but your friend. I will be your friend till death; I swear it to you. What you say is full of wisdom; my heart is yours. Embrace me."

"No, no, that is not necessary; we are young people and we might perhaps allow ourselves to go astray. I wish only for your friendship, but I do not want you to give it to me for nothing. I wish to deserve it by giving you solid proofs of my friendship for you. In the meanwhile I will tell them to serve dinner, and I hope that, after you have eaten something, you will be quite well."

I was astonished at her sagacity. It might all be calculated artifice and her aim might be to seduce me, but I did not trouble myself about that. I found myself almost in love with her and like to be the dupe

of her principles, which would have made themselves felt even if she had openly shared my love. I decided that I would add no fuel to my flames, and I felt certain that they would go out of their own accord. By leaving my love thus desolate, it would die of exhaustion. I argued like a fool. I forgot that it is not possible to stop at friendship with a pretty woman whom one sees constantly, and especially when one suspects her of being in love herself. At its height friendship becomes love and the palliative one is forced to apply to soothe it for a moment only increases its intensity. Such was the experience of Anacreon with Smerdis, Cleobulus and Bathyllus. A Platonist who claims that one is able to live with a young woman of whom one is fond, without becoming more than her friend, is a visionary who knows not what he says. My housekeeper was too young, too pretty and, above all, too pleasant, she had too keen a wit, for me not to be captivated by all these qualities conjoined; I was bound to become her lover.

We dined quietly together without saying anything about the affair we had at heart, for nothing is more imprudent or more dangerous than to speak in the presence of servants, who out of maliciousness or ignorance put the worst construction on what they hear, add or diminish, and think themselves privileged to divulge their master's secrets, especially as they know them without having been entrusted with them.

As soon as we were alone, my dear Dubois asked me if I had sufficient proof of Le Duc's fidelity.

"Well, my dear, he is a rascal and a profligate, full of impudence, sharp-witted, ignorant, a fearful liar, and nobody but myself has any power over him. However, he has one good quality and that is blind obedience to my orders. He defies the stick and he would defy the gallows if it were far enough off. When I have to ford a river on my travels, he strips off his clothes without my telling him and jumps in to see if I can cross in safety."

"That will do; he is just what we want under the circumstances. I will begin by assuring you, my dear friend, as you will have me style you thus, that Madame M—'s honour is perfectly safe. Follow my advice and, if the detestable widow does not take care, she will be the only person put to shame. But we need Le Duc; without him we can do nothing. Above all, we must find out how he contracted his disease, as several circumstances might throw obstacles in the way of my design. Go to him at once and find out all particulars and whether he has told any of the servants what is the matter with him. When you have heard what he has to say, warn him to keep the matter quiet."

I made no objection and, without endeavouring to penetrate her design, I went to Le Duc. I found him lying on his bed by himself. I sat down beside him, with a smile on my face, and promised to have him cured if he would tell me all the circumstances of the case.

"With all my heart, sir. The matter happened like this: The day you sent me to Soleure to get your letters, I got down at a roadside dairy to get a glass of milk. It was served to me by a young wench

who caught my fancy, and I gave her a hug; she raised no objections and in a quarter of an hour she put me in the state you see me in."

"Have you told anyone about it?"

"I took good care not to do so, as I should only have got laughed at. The doctor is the only one who knows what is the matter and he tells me the swelling will be gone down before to-morrow, and I hope I shall be able by that time to wait upon you."

"Very good, but remember to keep your own counsel."

I proceeded to inform my Minerva of our conversation, and she said, "Tell me whether the widow could take her oath that she spent the two hours on the sofa with you."

"No, for she didn't see me and I did not say a word."

"Very good; then sit down at your desk and write and tell her she is a liar, as you did not leave your room at all, and that you are making the necessary inquiries in your household to find out who is the wretched person she has unwittingly contaminated. Write at once and send off your letter directly. In an hour and a half's time you can write another letter; or rather you can copy what I am just going to put down."

"My dear, I see your plan; it is an ingenious one, but I have given my word of honour to Madame M— to take no steps in the matter without first consulting her."

"Then your word of honour must give way to the necessity of saving her honour. Your love retards your steps, but everything depends on our promptitude and on the interval between the first and second letter. Follow my advice, I beg of you, and you will know the rest from the letter I am going to write out for you to copy. Quick! write letter number one."

I did not allow myself to reflect. I was persuaded that no better plan could be found than that of my charming governess, and I proceeded to write the following love letter to the impudent monster:

"The impudence of your letter is in perfect accord with the three nights you spent in discovering a fact which has no existence save in your own perverse imagination. Know, cursed woman, that I never left my room and that I have not to deplore the shame of having passed two hours with a being such as you. God knows with whom you did pass them, but I mean to find out—if the whole story is not the creation of your devilish brain—and, when I do so, I will inform you."

"You may thank Heaven that I did not open your letter till after Monsieur and Madame M— had gone. I received it in their presence but, despising the hand that wrote it, I put it in my pocket, little caring what infamous stuff it contained. If I had been curious enough to read it and my guests had seen it, I would have you know that I would have gone in pursuit of you and at this moment you would be a corpse. I am quite well and have no symptoms of any complaint, but I shall not lower myself to convince you of my health, as your eyes would carry contagion as well as your wretched carcass."

I showed the letter to my dear Dubois, who thought it rather

strongly expressed, but approved of it on the whole; I then sent it to the horrible being who had caused me such unhappiness. An hour and a half afterwards I sent her the following letter, which I had copied without addition or subtraction:

"A quarter of an hour after I had sent off my letter, the village doctor came to tell me that my man had need of his treatment for a disease of a shameful nature which he had contracted quite recently. I told him to take care of his patient, and, when he had gone, I went to see the invalid, who confessed, after some pressure, that he had received this pretty present from you. I asked him how he had contrived to obtain access to you and he said that he saw you going by yourself in the dark into the apartment of M. M—. Knowing that I had gone to bed and having no further services to render me, curiosity made him go and see what you were doing there by stealth, as, if you had wanted to see the lady, who would be in bed by that time, you would not have gone by the door leading to the garden. He at first thought that you were there with evil intent and he waited an hour to see if you stole anything, in which case he would have arrested you; but, as you did not come out and he heard no noise, he resolved to go in after you and found you had left the door open. He has assured me that he had no intentions in the way of carnal enjoyment, and I can well believe him. He tells me he was on the point of crying for help, when you took hold of him and put your hand over his mouth; but he changed his plans on finding himself drawn gently to a couch and covered with kisses. You plainly took him for somebody else. 'And,' said he, 'I did her a service which she has done ill to recompense in this fashion.' He left you without saying a word as soon as the day began to dawn, his motive being fear of recognition. It is easy to see that you took my servant for myself, for in the night, you know, all cats are grey, and I congratulate you on obtaining an enjoyment you would certainly not have had from me, as I should most surely have recognised you directly from your breath and your aged charms, and I can tell you it would have gone hard with you. Luckily for you and for me things happened otherwise. I may tell you that the poor fellow is furious and intends making you a visit, from which course I believe I have no right to dissuade him. I advise you to hear him politely and to be in a generous mood when he comes, as he is a determined fellow, like all Spaniards, and, if you do not treat him properly, he will publish the matter and you will have to take the consequences. He will tell you himself what his terms are and I daresay you will be wise enough to grant them."

An hour after I had sent off this epistle, I received a reply to my first letter. She told me that my device was an ingenious one, but that it was no good, as she knew what she was talking about. She defied me to show her that I was healthy in the course of a few days.

While we were at supper, my dear Dubois tried her utmost to cheer me up, but all to no purpose; I was too much under the influence of strong emotion to yield to her high spirits. We discussed the third

step, which would put an apex to the scheme and cover the impudent woman with shame. As I had written the two letters according to my housekeeper's instructions, I determined to follow her advice to the end. She told me what to say to Le Duc in the morning; and, as she was curious to know what sort of stuff he was made of, she begged me to let her listen behind the curtains of my bed.

Next morning Le Duc came in and I asked him if he could ride on horseback to Soleure.

"Yes, sir," he replied, "but the doctor tells me I must begin to bathe to-morrow."

"Very good. As soon as your horse is ready, set out and go to Madame F—'s, but do not let her know you come from me or suspect that you are a mere emissary of mine. Say that you want to speak to her. If she refuses to receive you, wait outside in the street; but I fancy she will receive you, and without a witness either. Then say to her. 'You have given me my complaint without having been asked and I require you to give me sufficient money to get myself cured.' Add that she made you work for two hours in the dark and that, if it had not been for the fatal present she gave to you, you would have said nothing about it; but that, finding yourself in such a state (you needn't be ashamed to show her), she ought not to be astonished at your taking such a course. If she resists, threaten her with the law. That's all you have to do, but don't let my name appear. Return directly without loss of time, that I may know how you have made out."

"That's all very fine, sir, but if this jolly wench has me pitched out of the window, I shan't come home quite so speedily."

"Quite so, but you needn't be afraid; I will answer for your safety."

"It's a queer business you are sending me on."

"You are the only man I would trust to do it properly."

"I will do it all right, but I want to ask you one or two essential questions. Has the lady really got the—what-d'you-call-it?"

"She has."

"I am sorry for her. But how am I to prove that it was she who peppered me, when I have never spoken to her?"

"Do you usually catch that complaint by speaking, booby?"

"No, but one speaks in order to catch it, or while one is catching it."

"You spent two hours in the dark with her without a word being spoken, and she will see that she gave this fine present to you while she thought she was giving it to another."

"Ah! I begin to see my way, sir. But, if we were in the dark, how was I to know it was she I had to do with?"

"Thus: you saw her going in by the garden door and you marked her unobserved. But you may be sure she won't ask you any of these questions."

"I know what to do now. I will start at once and I am as curious as you to know what her answer will be. But here's another question comes into my head: she may try to strike a bargain over the sum I

am to ask for my cure. If so, shall I be content with three hundred francs?"

"That's too much for her; take half."

"But it isn't much for two hours of such pleasure for her and six weeks of such pain for me."

"I will make up the rest to you."

"That's good hearing. She is going to pay for the damage she has done. I fancy I see it all, but I shall say nothing. I would bet it is you to whom she has made this fine present and that you want to pay her back."

"Perhaps so; but keep your own counsel and set out."

"Do you know, I think the rascal is unique," said my dear Dubois, emerging from her hiding-place. "I had hard work to keep from laughing when he said that, if he were pitched out of the window, he would not come back so soon. I am sure he will acquit himself better than ever did diplomatist. When he gets to Soleure, the monster will have already dispatched her reply to your second letter. I am curious to see how it will turn out."

"To you, my dear, the honour of this comedy belongs. You have conducted this intrigue like a past master in the craft. It could never be taken for the work of a novice."

"Nevertheless, it is my first, and I hope it will be my last, intrigue."

"I hope she won't defy me to give evidence of my health?"

"You are quite well so far, I think?"

"Yes; and, by the way, it is possible she may have only leucorrhœa. I am longing to see the end of the piece and to set my mind at rest."

"Will you give Madame M— an account of our scheme?"

"Yes; but I shall not be able to give you the credit you deserve."

"I want to have credit only in your eyes."

"You cannot doubt that I honour you immensely and I shall certainly not deprive you of the reward that is your due."

"The only reward I ask for is for you to be perfectly open with me."

"You are very wonderful. Why do you interest yourself so much in my affairs? I don't like to think you are merely inquisitive."

"You would be wrong to think that I have a defect which would lower me in my own eyes. Be sure, sir, that I shall be curious only when you are sad."

"But what can have made you feel so generously towards me?"

"Only your honourable conduct towards me."

"You touch me profoundly and I promise to confide in you hereafter."

"You will make me happy."

Le Duc had been scarcely gone an hour when a messenger on foot came to bring me a second letter from the widow. He also gave me a small packet, telling me he had orders to wait for a reply. I sent him down to wait and gave the letter to Madame Dubois, that she might see what it contained. While she was reading it, I leant upon the window, my heart beating violently.

"Everything is getting on famously," cried my housekeeper. "Here is the letter; read it."

"Whether I am being told the truth or am the victim of a myth arising from your fertile imagination (for which you are too well known all over Europe), I will regard the whole story as true, since I am not in a position to disprove it. I am deeply grieved to have injured an innocent man who has never done me any ill, and I will willingly pay the penalty by giving him a sum which will be more than sufficient to cure him of the plague with which I infected him. I beg that you will give him the twenty-five louis I am sending you; they will serve to restore him to health and make him forget the bitterness of the pleasure I am so sorry to have procured for him. And now are you sufficiently generous to employ your authority as master to enjoin on your man the most absolute secrecy? I hope so, for you have reason to dread my vengeance otherwise. Consider that, if this affair is allowed to transpire, it will be easy for me to give it a turn which may be far from pleasant to you and which will force the worthy man you are deceiving to open his eyes, for I have not changed my opinion, as I have too many proofs of your understanding with his wife. As I do not desire that we should meet again, I shall go to Lucerne on the pretext of family concerns. Let me know that you have received this letter."

"I am sorry," I said, "to have sent Le Duc, as the harpy is violent and I am afraid of something happening to him."

"Don't be afraid," she replied, "nothing will happen, and it is better that they should see each other; it makes it more certain. Send her the money directly; she will have to give it to him herself and your vengeance will be complete. She will not be able to entertain the slightest suspicion, especially if Le Duc shows her her work, and in two or three hours you will have the pleasure of hearing everything from his lips. You have reason to bless your stars, as the honour of the woman you love is safe. The only thing that can trouble you is the remembrance of the widow's foul embraces and the certainty that the prostitute has communicated her complaint to you. Nevertheless, I hope it may prove a slight attack and be easily cured. An inveterate leucorrhœa is not exactly a shameful disease, and I have heard people in London say that it was rarely contagious. We ought to be very thankful that she is going to Lucerne. Laugh and be thankful; there is certainly a comic touch in our drama."

"Unfortunately, it is tragi-comic. I know the human heart and I am sure that I must have forfeited Madame M—'s affections."

"It is true that . . . But this is not the time to be thinking of such matters. Quick! write to her briefly and return her the twenty-five louis."

My reply was as follows:

"Your unworthy suspicions, your abominable design of revenge and the impudent letter you wrote me are the only causes of your no doubt bitter repentance. I hope that it will restore peace to your conscience. Our messengers have crossed, through no fault of mine. I return you

the twenty-five louis; you can give them to the man yourself. I could not prevent my servant from paying you a visit, but this time you will not keep him two hours and you will not find it difficult to appease his anger. I wish you a good journey and I shall certainly flee all occasions of meeting you for I always avoid the horrible; and you must know, odious woman, that it isn't everybody who endeavours to ruin the reputation of their friends. If you see the apostolic *nuncio* at Lucerne, ask him about me and he will tell you what sort of reputation I have in Europe. I can assure you that Le Duc has spoken only to me of his misadventure and that, if you treat him well, he will be discreet, as he certainly has nothing to boast of. Farewell."

My dear Minerva approved of this letter and I sent it with the money by the messenger.

"The play is not yet over," said my housekeeper; "we have three scenes more."

"What are they?"

"The return of your Spaniard, the appearance of the disease and the astonishment of Madame M— when she hears it all."

I counted the moments for Le Duc to return, but in vain; he did not appear. I was in a state of great anxiety, although my dear Dubois kept telling me that the only reason he was away so long was that the widow was out. Some people are so happily constituted that they never admit the possibility of misfortune. I was like that myself till the age of thirty, when I was put under The Leads. Now I am getting into my dotage and look on the dark side of everything. I am invited to a wedding and see nought but gloom; and, witnessing the coronation of Leopold II at Prague, I say to myself, "*Nolo coronari*." Cursed old age, thou art worthy of dwelling only in Hell, as others before me have thought also—*tristisque senectus*.

About half-past nine my housekeeper looked out and saw Le Duc by the moonlight coming along at a good pace. That news revived me. I had no light in the room and my housekeeper ran to hide in the recess, for she would not have missed a word of the Spaniard's communication.

"I am dying of hunger," said he, as he came in. "I had to wait for that woman till half-past six. When she came in, she found me on the stairs and told me to go about my business, as she had nothing to say to me.

" 'That may be, fair lady,' I replied, 'but I have a few words to say to you and I have been waiting here for a cursed time with that intent.'

" 'Wait a minute,' she replied; and then, putting into her pocket a packet and a letter which I thought was addressed in your writing, she told me to follow her. As soon as I got to her room, I saw there was no else present and I told her she had infected me and that I wanted the wherewithal to pay the doctor. As she said nothing, I proceeded to convince her of my infected state, but she turned away her head, and said, 'Have you been waiting for me long?'

“‘Since eleven, without having had a bite or a sup.’

“Thereupon she went out and, after asking the servant, whom I suppose she had sent here, what time he had come back, she returned to me, shut the door and gave me the packet, telling me that it contained twenty-five louis for my cure and that, if I valued my life, I would keep silence in the matter. I promised to be discreet and with that I left her and here I am. Does the packet belong to me?”

“Certainly. Have some supper and go to bed.”

My dear Dubois came out of her recess and embraced me and we spent a happy evening. Next morning I noticed the first symptoms of the disease the hateful widow had communicated to me, but in three or four days I found it was of a very harmless character, and a week later I was quite rid of it. My poor Spaniard, on the other hand, was in a pitiable case.

I passed the whole of the next morning in writing to Madame M—. I told her circumstantially all I had done, in disregard of my promise to consult her, and I sent her copies of all the letters, to convince her that our enemy had gone to Lucerne with the idea that her vengeance had been only an imaginary one. Thus I showed her that her honour was perfectly safe. I ended by telling her that I had noticed the first symptoms of the disease, but that I was certain of getting rid of it in a very few days. I sent my letter through her nurse and in two days’ time I had a few lines from her, informing me that I should see her in the course of the week in company with her husband and M. de Chavigni.

Unhappy I! I was obliged to renounce all thoughts of love, but my Dubois, who was with me nearly all day on account of Le Duc’s illness, began to stand me in good stead. The more I determined to be only a friend to her, the more I was taken with her; and it was in vain that I told myself that, from seeing her without any love-making, my sentiment for her would die a natural death. I had made her a present of a ring, telling her that, whenever she wanted to get rid of it, I would give her a hundred louis for it; but this could only happen in time of need, an impossible contingency while she continued with me, and I had no idea of sending her away. She was natural and sincere, endowed with a ready wit and good reasoning powers. She had never been in love and had married only to please Lady Montagu. She wrote only to her mother and, to please her, I read the letters. They were full of filial piety and were admirably written.

One day the fancy took me to ask to read the letters her mother wrote in reply. “She never replies,” said she.

“Why?”

“For an excellent reason, namely, that she cannot write. I thought she was dead when I came back from England, and it was a happy surprise to find her in perfect health when I got to Lausanne.”

“Who came with you from England?”

“Nobody.”

“I can’t credit that. Young, beautiful, well dressed, obliged to asso-

ciate casually with all kinds of people, young men and profligates (for there are such everywhere), how did you manage to defend yourself?"

"Defend myself? I never needed to do so. The best plan for a young woman is never to stare at any man, to pretend not to hear certain questions and certainly not to answer them, to sleep by herself in a room where there is a lock and key, or with the landlady when possible. When a girl has travelling adventures, one may safely say that she has courted them, for it is easy to be discreet in all countries if one wishes."

She spoke justly. She assured me that she had never had an adventure and had never tripped, as she was fortunate enough not to be of an amorous disposition. Her naïve stories, her freedom from prudery and her sallies full of wit and good sense amused me from morning till night, and we sometimes *thowed* each other; this was going rather far and should have shown us that we were on the brink of the precipice. She talked with much admiration of the charms of Madame M— and showed the liveliest interest in my stories of amorous adventure. When I got on risky ground, I would make as if I would fain spare her all unseemly details, but she begged me so gracefully to hide nothing that I found myself obliged to satisfy her; but, when my descriptions became so faithful as to set us on fire, she would burst into a laugh, put her hand over my mouth and fly like a hunted gazelle to her room and then lock herself in. One day I asked her why she did so and she answered, "To hinder you from coming to ask me for what I could not refuse you at such moments."

The day before that on which Monsieur and Madame M— and M. de Chavigni came to dine with me, she asked me if I had had any amorous adventures in Holland. I told her about Esther and, when I came to the mole and my inspection of it, my charming inquisitor ran to stop my mouth, her sides shaking with laughter. I held her gently to me and could not help seeking whether she had a mole in the same place, to which she opposed but a feeble resistance. I was prevented by my unfortunate condition from immolating the victim on the altar of love, so we confined ourselves to a make-believe combat which lasted only a minute; however, our eyes took part in it and our excited feelings were by no means appeased. When we had done, she said, laughing but yet discreetly, "My dear friend, we are in love with one another and, if we do not take care, we shall not long be content with this trifling."

Sighing as she spoke, she wished me good night and went to bed with her ugly little maid. This was the first time we had allowed ourselves to be overcome by the violence of our passion, but the first step was taken. As I retired to rest, I felt that I was in love and foresaw that I should soon be under the rule of my charming housekeeper.

Monsieur and Madame M— and M. de Chavigni gave us an agreeable surprise the next day by coming to dine with us, and we passed the time till dinner by walking in the garden. My dear Dubois did the honours of the table and I was glad to see that my two male guests were delighted with her, for they did not leave her for a moment during

the afternoon, and I was thus enabled to tell my charmer all I had written to her. Nevertheless I took care not to say a word about the share my housekeeper had had in the matter, for my mistress would have been mortified at the thought that her weakness was known to Madame Dubois.

"I was delighted to read your letters," said she, "and to hear that that villainous woman can no longer flatter herself upon having spent two hours with you. But tell me, how can you have actually spent them with her without noticing, in spite of the dark, the difference between her and me? She is much shorter, much thinner and ten years older. Besides her breath is disagreeable and I think you know that I have not that defect. Certainly, you could not see her hair, but you could touch—and yet you noticed nothing! I can scarcely believe it!"

"Unhappily, it is only too true. I was inebriated with love and, thinking only of you, I saw nothing but you."

"I understand how strong the imagination would be at first, but this element should have been much diminished after the first or second assault; and, above all, because she differs from me in a matter which I cannot conceal and she cannot supply."

"You are right—a bust of Venus! When I think that I touched only two dangling, flabby breasts, I feel as if I did not deserve to live!"

"And you felt them and they did not disgust you!"

"Could I be disgusted, could I even reflect, when I felt certain that I held you in my arms, you for whom I would give my life? No, a rough skin, a stinking breath and a fortification carried with far too much ease—nothing could moderate my amorous fury."

"What do I hear? Accursed and unclean woman, nest of impurities! And could you forgive me all those defects?"

"I repeat, the idea that I possessed you deprived me of my thinking faculties; all seemed to me divine."

"You should have treated me like a common prostitute; you should even have beaten me on finding me such as you describe."

"Ah! now you are unjust!"

"That may be; I am so enraged against that monster that my anger deprives me of reason. But, now that she thinks that she had to do with a servant and after the degrading visit she has had, she ought to die of rage and shame. What astonishes me is her believing it, for he is shorter than you by four inches. And how can she imagine that a servant would do it as well as you? It's not likely. I am sure she is in love with him now. Twenty-five louis! He would have been content with ten. What a good thing that the poor fellow's illness happened so conveniently. But I suppose you had to tell him all?"

"Not at all. I gave him to understand that she had made an appointment with me in that room and that I had really spent two hours with her, not speaking for fear of being heard. Then, thinking over the orders I gave him, he came to the conclusion that, on finding myself diseased, I was disgusted and, being able to disavow my presence, I had done so for the sake of revenge."

"That's admirable, and the impudence of the Spaniard passes all belief. But her boldness is the most astonishing thing of all. But supposing her illness had been a mere trick to frighten you, what a risk the rascal would have run!"

"I was afraid of that, as I had no symptoms of disease whatever."

"But now you really have it, and all through my fault. I am in despair."

"Be calm, my angel, my disease is of a very trifling nature. I am taking only nitre and in a week I shall be quite well again. I hope that then . . ."

"Ah! my dear friend."

"What?"

"Don't let us think of that any more, I beseech you."

"You are disgusted, and not unnaturally; but your love cannot be very strong. Ah! how unfortunate I am."

"I am more unfortunate than you. I love you and you would be thankless indeed if you ceased to love me. Let us love each other, but let us not endeavour to give one another proofs of our love. It might be fatal. That accursed widow! She is gone away and in a fortnight we shall be going also to Bâle, where we remain till the end of November."

"The die is cast and I see that I must submit to your decision, or rather to my destiny, for none but fatal events have befallen me since I came to Switzerland. My only consoling thought is that I have made your honour safe."

"You have won my husband's friendship and esteem; we shall always be good friends."

"If you are going, I feel that I must go before you do. That will tend to convince the wretched author of my woe that there is nothing blameworthy in my friendship for you."

"You reason like an angel and you convince me more and more of your love. Where are you going?"

"To Italy; but I shall take in Berne and Geneva on my way."

"You will not be coming to Bâle, then? I am glad to hear it, in spite of the pleasure it would give me to see you. No doubt your arrival would give a handle for the gossips and I might suffer by it. But, if possible, in the few days you are to remain, show yourself to be in good spirits, for sadness does not become you."

We rejoined the ambassador and M. M—, who had not had time to think about us, as my dear Dubois had kept them amused by her lively conversation. I reproached her for the way in which she husbanded her wit as far as I was concerned, and M. de Chavigni, seizing the opportunity, told us it was because we were in love and lovers are known to be chary of their words. My housekeeper was not long in finding a repartee and she again began to entertain the two gentlemen, so that I was enabled to continue my walk with Madame M—, who said:

"Your housekeeper, my dear friend, is a masterpiece. Tell me the

truth, and I promise to give you a mark of my gratitude that will please you before I go."

"Speak; what do you wish to know?"

"You love her and she loves you in return."

"I think you are right, but so far . . ."

"I don't want to know any more, for, if matters are not yet arranged, they soon will be, and so it comes to the same thing. If you had told me you did not love her, I should not have believed you, for I can't conceive that a man of your age can live with a woman like that without loving her. She is very pretty and exceedingly intelligent, she has good spirits, talents and excellent manners and speaks exceedingly well; that is enough to charm you and I expect you will find it difficult to separate from her. Lebel did her a bad turn in sending her to you, as she used to have an excellent reputation and now she will no longer be able to get a place with ladies in the highest society."

"I shall take her to Berne."

"That is a good idea."

Just as they were going, I said that I should soon be coming to Soleure to thank them for the distinguished reception they had given me, as I proposed leaving in a few days. The idea of never seeing Madame M— again was so painful to me that, as soon as I re-entered the house, I went to bed, and my housekeeper, respecting my melancholy, retired after wishing me good night.

In two or three days I received a note from my charmer, bidding me call upon them the day following at about ten o'clock and telling me I was to stay for dinner. I carried out her orders to the letter. M. M— gave me a most friendly reception, but, saying that he was obliged to go into the country and could not be home till one o'clock, he begged me not to be offended if he delivered me over to his wife for the morning. Such is the fate of a miserable husband! His wife was engaged with a young girl at tambour work; I accepted her company on the condition that she would not allow me to disturb her work.

The girl went away at noon and soon after we went to enjoy the fresh air outside the house. We sat in a summer-house from which, ourselves unseen, we could see all the carriages that approached the house.

"Why, dearest, did you not procure me this bliss when I was in good health?"

"Because at that time my husband suspected that you had turned yourself into a waiter for my sake and that you could not be indifferent towards me. Your discretion has destroyed his suspicions, as has also your housekeeper, whom he believes to be your wife and who has taken his fancy to such an extent that I believe he would willingly consent to an exchange, for a few days at any rate. Would you agree?"

"Ah! if the exchange could only be effected!"

Having only an hour before me and foreseeing that it would be the last I should pass beside her, I threw myself at her feet. She was full of affection and put no obstacles in the way of my desires, save those

which my own feelings dictated, for I loved her too well to consent to injure her health. I did all I could to replace the utmost bliss, but the pleasure she enjoyed doubtless consisted in a great measure in showing me her superiority to the horrible widow.

When we saw the husband's carriage coming, we rose and took care that the worthy man should not find us in the harbour. He made a thousand excuses for not having returned sooner.

We had an excellent dinner and at table he talked almost entirely of my housekeeper and seemed moved when I said I meant to take her to Lausanne to her mother. I took leave of them at five o'clock with a broken heart, and from there I went to M. de Chavigni and told him all my adventures. He had a right to be told, as he had done all in his power to insure the success of a project which had failed only by an unexampled fatality.

In admiration of my dear Dubois's wit—for I did not conceal the part she played—he said that, old as he was, he should think himself quite happy if he had such a woman with him, and he was much pleased when I told him that I was in love with her. 'Don't give yourself the trouble, my dear Casanova, of running from house to house to take leave,' said the amiable nobleman. 'It can be done just as well at the assembly and you need not even stay to supper if you don't want to.'

I followed his advice and thus saw again Madame M—, as I thought, for the last time, but I was wrong; I saw her ten years afterwards; and at the proper time the reader will see where, when, how and under what circumstances.

Before going away, I followed the ambassador to his room to thank him as he deserved for his kindness and to ask him to give me a letter of introduction for Berne, where I thought of staying a fortnight. I also begged him to send Lebel to me, that we might settle our accounts. He told me that Lebel would bring me a letter for M. de Muralt, the mayor of Thun.

When I got home, feeling sad on this, the eve of my leaving a town where I had had but trifling victories and heavy losses, I thanked my housekeeper for waiting for me, and, to give her a good night, I told her that in three days we should set out for Berne and that my mails must be packed.

Next day, after a somewhat silent breakfast, she said, "You will take me with you, won't you?"

"Certainly, if you like me well enough to want to go."

"I would go with you to the end of the world, all the more as you are now sick and sad and, when I saw you first, you were blithe and well. If I must leave you, I hope at least to see you happy first."

The doctor came in just then to tell me that my poor Spaniard was so ill that he could not leave his bed.

"I will have him cured at Berne," said I. "Tell him that we are going to dine there the day after to-morrow."

"I must tell you, sir, that, though it's only a seven leagues' journey, he cannot possibly undertake it, as he has lost the use of all his limbs."

"I am sorry to hear that, doctor."

"I dare say, but it's true."

"I must verify the matter with my own eyes." And, so saying, I went to see Le Duc.

I found the poor rascal, as the doctor had said, incapable of motion. He had the use of only his tongue and his eyes.

"You are in a pretty state," said I to him.

"I am very ill, sir, though otherwise I feel quite well."

"I expect so, but, as it is, you can't move and I want to dine in Berne the day after to-morrow."

"Have me carried there; I shall get cured."

"You are right, I will have you carried in a litter."

"I shall look like a saint in a procession."

I told one of the servants to look after him and see to all that was necessary for our departure. I had him taken to The Falcon by two horses who carried his litter.

Lebel came at noon and gave me the letter his master had written for M. de Muralt. He brought his receipts and I paid everything without objection, as I found him an entirely honest man, and I had him to dinner with Madame Dubois and myself. I did not feel disposed to talk and I was glad to see that they got on without me; they talked away admirably and amused me, for Lebel was by no means wanting in wit. He said he was very glad I had given him an opportunity of knowing the housekeeper, as he could not say he had known her before, having seen her only two or three times in passing through Lausanne. On rising from the table, he asked my permission to write to her, and she, putting in her voice, called on him not to forget to do so.

Lebel was a good-natured man, of an honest appearance and approaching his fiftieth year. Just as he was going, without asking my leave, he embraced her in the French fashion and she seemed not to have the slightest objection.

She told me, as soon as he was gone, that this worthy man might be useful to her and that she was delighted to enter into a correspondence with him.

The next day was spent in putting everything in order for our short journey and Le Duc went off in his litter, intending to rest for the night at four leagues from Soleure. On the day following, after I had remembered the doorkeeper, the cook and the man-servant I was leaving behind, I set out in my carriage with the charming Dubois and at eleven o'clock arrived at the inn at Berne, where Le Duc had preceded me by two hours. In the first place, knowing the habits of Swiss inn-keepers, I made an agreement with the landlord; and I then told the servant I had kept, who came from Berne, to take care of Le Duc, to put him under good medical superintendence and bid the doctor spare nothing to cure him completely.

I dined with my housekeeper in her room, for she had a separate lodging, and, after sending my letter to M. de Muralt, I went out for a walk.

CHAPTER 72

I REACHED an elevation from which I could look over a vast stretch of country watered by a little river and, noticing a path leading to a kind of stair, the fancy took me to follow it. I went down about a hundred steps and found forty small closets, which I concluded were bathing-houses. While I was looking at the place, an honest-looking fellow came up to me and asked if I would like a bath. I said I would and he opened one of the closets and before long I was surrounded by a crowd of young girls.

"Sir," said the man, "they all aspire to the honour of attending you while you bathe; you have only to choose which it shall be. Half-a-crown will pay for the bath, the girl and your coffee."

As if I were the Grand Turk, I examined the swarm of rustic beauties and threw my handkerchief at the one I liked the best. We went into a closet and, shutting the door with the most serious air, without even looking at me, she undressed me and put a cotton cap on my head, and, as soon as she saw me in the water, she undressed as coolly as possible and without a word came into the bath. Then she rubbed me all over, except in a certain quarter which I had covered with my hands. When I thought I had been manipulated sufficiently, I asked for coffee. She got out of the bath, opened the door and, after asking for what I wanted, got in again without the slightest self-consciousness.

When the coffee came, she got out again to take it, shut the door and returned to the bath and held the tray while I was drinking, and, when I had finished, she remained beside me.

Although I had taken no great notice of her, I could see that she possessed all the qualifications a man could desire in a woman: fine features, lively eyes, a pretty mouth and an excellent row of teeth, a healthy complexion, a well rounded bosom, a curved back and all else in the same sort. I certainly thought her hands might have been softer, but their hardness was probably due to hard work. Furthermore, she was only eighteen—and yet I remained cold to all her charms. How was that? That was the question I asked myself, and I think the reason probably was that she was too natural, too devoid of those assumed graces and coquettish airs which women employ with so much art for the seduction of men. We care only for artifice and false show. Perhaps, too, our senses, to be aroused, require woman's charms to be veiled by modesty. But if, accustomed as we are to clothe ourselves, the face is, the smallest factor in our perfect happiness, how is it that the face plays the principal part in rendering a man amorous? Why do we take the face as an index of a woman's beauty and why do we forgive her when the covered parts are not in harmony with her features? Would it not be much more reasonable and sensible to veil the face and have the rest of the body naked? Thus, when we fell in love with a woman, we should only want, as the crown of our bliss, to see a face answerable to those other charms which had taken our fancy. There can be no doubt that that would be the better plan, as in that case we

should be seduced only by a perfect beauty and we should grant an easy pardon if, at the lifting of the mask, we found ugliness instead of loveliness. Under those circumstances an ugly woman, happy in exercising the seductive power of her other charms, would never consent to unveil herself, while the pretty ones would not have to be asked. The plain women would not make us sigh for long; they would be easily subdued on the condition of remaining veiled, and, if they did consent to unmask, it would be only after they had practically convinced one that enjoyment is possible without facial beauty. And it is evident and undeniable that inconstancy proceeds only from the variety of features. If a man did not see the face, he would always be constant and always in love with the first woman who had taken his fancy. I know that, in the opinion of the foolish, all this will seem folly, but I shall not be on earth to answer their objection.

When I had left the bath, she wiped me with towels, put on my shirt and then in the same state—that is, quite naked—she did my hair.

While I was dressing, she dressed, too, and, having soon finished, she came to buckle my shoes. I then gave her half-a-crown for the bath and six francs for herself; she kept the half-a-crown, but gave me back the six francs with silent contempt. I was mortified; I saw that I had offended her and that she considered her behaviour entitled her to respect. I went away in a rather bad humour.

After supper I could not help telling my dear Dubois of the adventure I had had in the afternoon, and she made her own comments on the details. "She can't have been pretty," said she, "for, if she had been, you would certainly have given way. I should like to see her."

"If you like, I will take you there."

"I should be delighted."

"But you will have to dress like a man."

She rose, went out without a word and in a quarter of an hour returned in a suit of Le Duc's, but minus the trousers, as she had certain protuberances which would have stood out too much. I told her to take a pair of my breeches and we settled to go to the bath the next morning.

She came to wake me at six o'clock. She was dressed like a man and wore a blue overcoat which disguised her shape admirably. I rose and went to La Mata, as the place is called.

Animated by the pleasure the expedition gave her, my dear Dubois looked radiant. Those who saw her must have seen through her disguise, she was so evidently a woman; so she wrapped herself up in her overcoat as well as she could.

As soon as we arrived, we saw the master of the baths, who asked me if I wanted a closet for four and I replied in the affirmative. We were soon surrounded by the girls and I showed my housekeeper the one who had not seduced me; she made choice of her and, I having fixed upon a big, determined-looking wench, we shut ourselves up in the bath.

As soon as I was undressed, I went into the water with my big at-

tendant. My housekeeper was not so quick; the novelty of the thing astonished her and her expression told me that she repented of having come; but, putting a good face on it, she began to laugh at seeing me rubbed by the female grenadier. She had some hesitation before she could take off her chemise, but, as it is only the first step that costs, she let it fall off, and, though she held her two hands before her, she dazzled me, in spite of myself, by the beauty of her form. Her attendant prepared to treat her as she had treated me, but she begged to be left alone; and, on my following her example, she was obliged to let me attend her.

The two Swiss girls, who had no doubt often been present at a similar situation, began to give us a spectacle which was well known to me, but which was quite strange to my dear Dubois.

This entertainment lasted for two hours and we returned to the town well pleased with one another. On leaving the bath, I gave a louis to each of the two Bacchantes and we went away determined to go there no more. It will be understood that, after what had happened, there could be no further obstacle to the free progress of our love, and accordingly my dear Dubois became my mistress and we made each other happy during all the time we spent at Berne. I was quite cured of my misadventure with the horrible widow and I found that, if love's pleasures are fleeting, so are its pains; I will go farther and maintain that the pleasures are of much longer duration, as they leave memories which can be enjoyed in old age, whereas, if a man does happen to remember the pains, it is so slightly as to have no influence upon his happiness.

At ten o'clock the Mayor of Thun was announced. He was dressed in the French fashion, in black, and had a manner at once graceful and polite that pleased me. He was middle-aged and enjoyed a considerable position in the government. He insisted on my reading the letter that M. de Chavigni had written him on my account. It was so flattering that I told him that, if it had not been sealed, I should not have had the face to deliver it. He asked me for the next day to a supper composed of men only, and for the day after that to a supper at which women as well as men would be present. I went with him to the library, where we saw M. Félix, an unfrocked monk, more of a scribbler than a scholar, and a young man named Schmidt, who gave good promise and was already known to advantage in the literary world. I also had the misfortune of meeting here a very learned man of a very wearisome kind; he knew the names of ten thousand shells by heart and I was obliged to listen to him for two hours, although I was totally ignorant of his science. Amongst other things he told me that the Aar contained gold. I replied that all great rivers contained gold, but he shrugged his shoulders and did not seem convinced.

I dined with M. de Muralt in company with four or five of the most distinguished women in Berne. I liked them very well and above all Madame de Saconai struck me as particularly amiable and well edu-

cated. I should have paid my addresses to her if I had been staying long in the so-called capital of Switzerland.

The ladies of Berne are well, though not extravagantly dressed, as luxury is forbidden by the laws. Their manners are good and they speak French with perfect ease. They enjoy the greatest liberty without abusing it, for, in spite of gallantry, decency reigns everywhere. The husbands are not jealous, but they require their wives to be home by supper-time.

I spent three weeks in the town, my time being divided between my dear Dubois and an old lady of eighty-five who interested me greatly by her knowledge of chemistry. She had been intimately connected with the celebrated Boerhaave and she showed me a plate of gold he had transmuted in her presence from copper. I believed as much as I liked of this, but she assured me that Boerhaave possessed the philosopher's stone but had not discovered the secret of prolonging life many years beyond the century. Boerhaave, however, was not able to apply this knowledge to himself, as he died of a polypus on the heart before he had attained the age of perfect maturity, which Hippocrates fixes at between sixty and seventy years. The four millions he left to his daughter, if they do not prove that he could make gold, certainly proved that he could save it. The worthy woman told me he had given her a manuscript in which the whole process was explained, but she found it very obscure.

"You should publish it," said I.

"God forbid!"

"Burn it, then."

"I can't make up my mind to do so."

M. de Muralt took me to see the military evolutions gone through by the citizens of Berne, who are all soldiers, and I asked him the meaning of the bear to be seen above the gate of the town. The German for "bear" is *Bär*, *Bären* and the animal has given its name to the town and canton which ranks second in the Republic, although it is in the first place for its wealth and culture. It is a peninsula formed by the Aar, which rises near the Rhine. The mayor spoke to me of the power of the canton, its lordships and bailiwicks, and explained his own powers; he then described the public policy and told me of the different systems of government which compose the Helvetic Union.

"I understand perfectly well," I said, "that each of the thirteen cantons has its own government."

"I daresay you do," he replied, "but what you don't understand, any more than I do, is that there is a canton which has four separate governments."

I had an excellent supper with fourteen or fifteen senators. There were no jokes, no frivolous conversation and no literature; but law, the commonweal, commerce, political economy, speculation, love of country and the duty of preferring liberty to life, in abundance. I felt as if I were in a new element, but I enjoyed the privilege of being a man amidst men who were all an honour to our common humanity.

But, as the supper went on, these rigid republicans began to expand, the discourse became less measured, there were even some bursts of laughter, owing to the wine. I excited their pity and, though they praised sobriety, they thought mine excessive. However, they respected my liberty and did not oblige me to drink, as the Russians, Swedes, Poles and most northern peoples do.

We parted at midnight—a very late hour in Switzerland—and, as they wished me a good night, each of them made me a sincere offer of his friendship. One of the company at an early period of the supper, before he had begun to get mellow, had condemned the Venetian Republic for banishing the Grisons, but, on his intellect being enlightened by Bacchus, he made his apologies.

“Every government,” said he, “ought to know its own interest better than strangers and everybody should be allowed to do what he wills in his own house.”

When I got home, I found my housekeeper lying in my bed. I gave her a hundred caresses in witness of my joy and assured her practically of my love and gratitude. I considered her as my wife, we cherished each other and did not allow the thought of separating to enter our minds. When two lovers love each other in all freedom, the idea of parting seems impossible.

Next morning I got a letter from the worthy Madame d’Urfé, who begged me to call on Madame de la Saone, wife of a friend of hers, a lieutenant-general. This lady had come to Berne in the hope of getting cured of a disease which had disfigured her in an incredible manner. Madame de la Saone was immediately introduced to all the best society in the place. She gave a supper every day, asking only men; she had an excellent cook. She had given notice that she would pay no calls and she was quite right. I hastened to make my bow to her; but good heavens! what a terrible and melancholy sight did I behold!

I saw a woman dressed with the utmost elegance, reclining voluptuously upon a couch. As soon as she saw me, she arose, gave me a most gracious reception and, going back to her couch, invited me to sit beside her. She doubtless noticed my surprise, but, being probably accustomed to the impression which the first sight of her created, she talked on in the most friendly manner and by so doing diminished my aversion.

Her appearance was as follows:

Madame de la Saone was beautifully dressed and had the whitest hands and the roundest arms that can be imagined. Her dress, which was cut very low, allowed me to see an exquisite breast of dazzling whiteness, heightened by two rosy buds; her figure was good, and her feet the smallest I have ever seen. All about her inspired love, but, when one’s eyes turned to her face, every other feeling gave way to those of horror and pity. She was fearful. Instead of a face, one saw a blackened and disgusting scab. No feature was distinguishable and her ugliness was made more conspicuous and dreadful by two fine eyes full of fire and a lipless mouth which she kept parted, as if to disclose two

rows of teeth of dazzling whiteness. She could not laugh, for the pain caused by the contraction of the muscles would doubtless have drawn tears to her eyes; nevertheless, she appeared contented, her conversation was delightful, full of wit and humour and permeated with the tone of good society. She might be thirty at the most and she had left three beautiful young children behind in Paris. Her husband was a fine, well built man, who loved her tenderly and had never slept apart from her. It is probable that few soldiers have shown such courage as this, but it is to be supposed that he did not carry his bravery so far as to kiss her, as the very thought made one shudder. A disorder contracted after her first childbed had left the poor woman in this sad state and she had borne it for ten years. All the best doctors in France had tried in vain to cure her and she had come to Berne to put herself into the hands of two well known physicians who had promised to do so. Every quack makes promises of this sort; their patients are cured or not cured, as it happens, and, provided they pay heavily, the doctor is ready enough to lay the fault, not on his own ignorance, but at the door of his poor, deluded patient.

The doctor came while I was with her and just as her intelligent conversation was making me forget her face. She had already begun to take his remedies, which were partly composed of mercury.

"It seems to me," said she, "that the itching has increased since I have taken your medicines."

"It will last," said the son of Æsculapius, "till the end of the cure and that will take about three months."

"As long as I scratch myself," said she, "I shall be in the same state and the cure will never be completed."

The doctor replied in an evasive manner. I rose to take my leave and, holding my hand, she asked me to supper once for all. I went the same evening; the poor woman ate of everything and drank some wine, as the doctor had not put her on any diet. I saw that she would never be cured.

Her good temper and her charming conversational powers kept all the company amused. I conceived that it would be possible to get used to her face and live with her without being disgusted. In the evening I talked about her to my housekeeper, who said that the beauty of her body and her mental endowments might be sufficient to attract people to her. I agreed, though I felt that I could never become one of her lovers.

Three or four days after I went to a bookseller's to read the newspaper and was politely accosted by a fine young man of twenty, who said that Madame de la Saone was sorry not to have seen me again at supper.

"You know the lady?"

"I had the honour to sup at her house with you."

"True; I remember you."

"I get her the books she likes, as I am a bookseller, and not only do

I sup with her every evening, but we breakfast together every morning before she gets up."

"I congratulate you. I bet you are in love with her."

"You are pleased to jest, but she is pleasanter than you think."

"I do not jest at all, but I would wager she would not have the courage to push things to an extremity."

"Perhaps you would lose."

"Really? I should be very glad to."

"Let us make a bet."

"How will you convince me I have lost?"

"Let us bet a louis and you will promise to be discreet."

"Very good."

"Come and sup at her house this evening and I will tell you something."

"You shall see me there."

When I got home, I told my housekeeper what I had heard.

"I am curious to know," said she, "how he will convince you." I promised to tell her, which pleased her very much.

I was exact to my appointment. Madame de la Saone reproached me pleasantly for my absence and gave me a delicious supper. The young bookseller was there, but, as his sweetheart did not speak a word to him, he said nothing and passed unnoticed.

After supper we went out together and he told me on the way that, if I liked, he would satisfy me the next morning at eight o'clock. "Call here and the lady's maid will tell you her mistress is not visible, but you have only to say that you will wait and that you will go into the ante-chamber. This room has a glass door commanding a view of madame's bed, and I will take care to draw back the curtains over the door, so that you will be able to see at your ease all that passes between us. When the affair is over, I shall go out by another door, she will call her maid and you will be shown in. At noon, if you will allow me, I will bring you some books to The Falcon and, if you find that you have lost, you shall pay me the louis." I promised to carry out his directions and we parted.

I was curious to see what would happen, though I by no means regarded it as an impossibility; and, on my presenting myself at eight o'clock, the maid let me in as soon as I said that I would wait. I found a corner of the glass door before which there was no curtain and, on applying my eye to the place, I saw my young adventurer holding his conquest in his arms on the bed. An enormous nightcap entirely concealed her face—an excellent precaution which favoured the bookseller's enterprise.

At noon, the young bookseller brought me some books I had ordered and, while paying him for them, I gave him our bet and a louis over and above, as a mark of my satisfaction at his prowess. He took it with a smile which seemed to show that he thought I ought to think myself lucky to have lost. My housekeeper looked at him for some time and asked if he knew her; he said he did not.

"I saw you when you were a child," said she. "You are the son of M. Mignard, minister of the Gospel. You must have been ten when I saw you."

"Possibly, madame."

"You did not care to follow your father's profession, then?"

"No, madame, I feel much more inclined to the worship of the creature than the Creator and I did not think my father's profession would suit me."

"You are right, for a minister of the Gospel ought to be discreet and discretion is a restraint."

This stroke made him blush, but we did not give him time to lose courage. I asked him to dine with me and, without mentioning the name of Madame de la Saone, he told his amorous adventures and numerous anecdotes about the pretty women of Berne.

After he had gone, my housekeeper said that once was quite enough to see a young man of his complexion. I agreed with her and had no more to do with him; but I heard that Madame de la Saone took him to Paris and made his fortune. Many fortunes are made in this manner and there are some which originated still less nobly. I returned to Madame de la Saone only to take my leave, as I shall shortly relate.

I was happy with my charmer, who told me again and again that with me she lived in bliss. No fears or doubts as to the future troubled her mind; she was certain, as I was, that we should never leave each other; and she told me she would pardon all the infidelities I might be guilty of, provided I made full confession. Hers, indeed, was a disposition with which to live in peace and content, but I was not born to enjoy such happiness.

After we had been a fortnight at Berne, my housekeeper received a letter from Soleure. It came from Lebel. As I saw she read it with great attention, I asked her what it was about.

"Take it and read it," said she; and she sat down in front of me to read my soul by the play of my features.

Lebel asked her, in concise terms, if she would become his wife.

"I have put off the proposition," said he, "only to set my affairs in order and see if I could afford to marry you even if the consent of the ambassador were denied us. I find I am rich enough to live well in Berne or elsewhere without the necessity of my working; however, I shall not have to face that alternative, for, at the first hint of the matter to M. de Chavigni, he gave his consent with the best grace imaginable."

He went on begging her not to keep him long waiting for a reply and to tell him, first, if she consented, and secondly, whether she would like to live at Berne and be mistress in her own house or return to Soleure and live with the ambassador, which latter plan might bring them some profit. He ended by declaring that whatever she had would be for her sole use and that he would give her a dower of a hundred thousand francs. He did not say a word about me.

"Dearest," said I, "you are at perfect liberty to choose your own

course, but I cannot contemplate your leaving me without considering myself as the most unhappy of men."

"And, if I lost you, I should be the most unhappy of women; for, if you love me, I care not whether we are married or no."

"Very good; but what answer are you going to make?"

"You shall see my letter to-morrow. I shall tell him politely but plainly that I love you, that I am yours, that I am happy and that it is thus impossible for me to accept his flattering proposition. I shall also say that I appreciate his generosity and that, if I were wise, I should accept, but that, being the slave of my love for you, I can only follow my inclination."

"I think you give an excellent turn to your letter. In refusing such an offer, you could not have better reasons than those you give and it would be absurd to try to persuade him that we are not lovers, as the thing is self-evident. Nevertheless, my darling, the letter saddens me."

"Why, dearest?"

"Because I have not a hundred thousand francs to offer you."

"I despise them; and, if you were to offer me such a sum, I should accept it only to lay it at your feet. You are certainly not destined to become penniless, but, if that should come to pass, be sure that I should be only too happy to share your poverty."

We fell into one another's arms and love made us taste all its pleasures. Nevertheless, in the midst of bliss some tinge of sadness came over our souls. Languishing love seems to redouble in strength, but this is only in appearance; sadness exhausts love more than enjoyment. Love is a madcap who must be fed on laughter and mirth, otherwise he dies of inanition.

Next day my sweetheart wrote to Lebel in the sense she had decided on and I felt obliged to write M. de Chavigni a letter in which love, sentiment and philosophy were mingled. I did not conceal from him that I loved to distraction the woman whom Lebel coveted, but I said that, as a man of honour, I would rather die than deprive my sweetheart of such solid advantages.

My letter delighted the housekeeper, for she was anxious to know what the ambassador thought of the affair, which demanded much reflection.

I got on the same day the letters of introduction I had asked Madame d'Urfé to give me, and I determined, to the joy of my dear Dubois, to set out for Lausanne. But we must hark back a little.

When one is sincerely in love, one thinks the beloved object full of deserts, and the mind, the dupe of the feelings, thinks all the world jealous of its bliss.

A M. de F—, member of the Council of the Two Hundred, whom I had met at Madame de la Saône's, had become my friend. He came to see me and I introduced him to my dear Dubois, whom he treated with the same distinction he would have used towards my wife. He had presented us to his wife and had come several times to see us.

with her and their daughter Sara. Sara was only thirteen, but she was extremely precocious, dark-complexioned and full of wit; she was continually uttering *naïvetés*, of which she understood the whole force, although, looking at her face, one would have thought her perfectly innocent. She excelled in the art of making her father and mother believe in her innocence, and thus she enjoyed plenty of liberty.

Sara had declared that she was in love with my housekeeper and, as her parents laughed at her, she lavished her caresses on my dear Dubois. She often came to breakfast with us and, when she found us in bed, she would embrace my sweetheart, whom she called her "wife," passing her hand over the coverlet to tickle her, telling her that she was her wife and she wanted to have a child. My sweetheart laughed and let her go on.

One day I told her jokingly that she would make me jealous, that I thought she was really a man and that I was going to make sure. The sly little puss told me that I was making a mistake, but that made me curious and my mind was soon at rest as to her sex. Perceiving that she had taken me in and got exactly what she wanted, I drew back and imparted my suspicions to my housekeeper, who said I was right. However, as the little girl had no part in my affections, I did not push the thing any farther.

Two or three days later this girl came in as I was getting up and said in her usual simple way, "Now that you know I am not really a man, you cannot be jealous or have any objection to my taking your place beside my little wife, if she will let me."

My housekeeper, who looked inclined to laugh, said, "Come along."

. . . Sara begged us not to say a word about it to her papa or mamma, as they would be sure to scold her as they had scolded her when she got her ears pierced without asking their leave.

Sara knew that we saw through her feigned simplicity, but she pretended not to as it was to her own advantage. Who could have instructed her in the arts of deceit? Nobody; only her natural wit, less rare in childhood than in youth, but always rare and astonishing. Her mother said her simple ways showed that she would one day be very intelligent, and her father maintained that they were signs of her stupidity. But, if Sara had been stupid, our burst of laughter would have disconcerted her, and she would have died for shame, instead of appearing all the better pleased when her father deplored her stupidity. She would affect astonishment and, by way of curing one sort of stupidity, she corroborated it by displaying another. She asked us questions to which we could not reply; we laughed at her instead, although it was evident that, before putting such questions, she must have reasoned over them. She might have rejoined that the stupidity was on her side, but by doing so she would have betrayed herself.

Lebel did not reply to his sweetheart, but M. de Chavigni wrote me a letter of four pages. He spoke like a philosopher and an experienced man of the world. He showed me that, if I were an old man like him

and able to insure a happy and independent existence to my sweetheart after my death, I should do well to keep her from all men, especially as there was so perfect a sympathy between us; but that, as I was a young man and did not intend to bind myself to her by the ties of marriage, not only should I consent to a union which seemed for her happiness, but as a man of honour it was my duty to use my influence with her in favour of the match. "With your experience," said the kind old gentleman, "you ought to know that a time will come when you will both regret having lost this opportunity, for your love is sure to become friendship, and then another love will replace that which you now think as firm as the god Terminus."

"Lebel," he added, "has told me his plans and, far from disapproving, I have encouraged him, for your charming friend won my entire esteem in the five or six times I had the pleasure of seeing her with you. I shall be delighted, therefore, to have her in my house, where I can enjoy her conversation without transgressing the laws of propriety. Nevertheless, you will understand that, at my age, I have formed no desires, for I could not satisfy them even if their object were compliant." He ended by telling me that Lebel had not fallen in love in a young man's style, that he had reflected on what he was doing and would consequently not hurry her, as she would see in the letter he was going to send her. A marriage ought always to be undertaken in cold blood.

I gave the letter to my housekeeper, who read it attentively and gave it back to me quite coolly.

"What do you think of his advice, dearest?" I asked.

"I think I had better follow it; he says there is no hurry and delay is all we want. Let us love each other and think only of that. This letter is written with great wisdom, but I cannot imagine our becoming indifferent to each other, though I know such a thing is possible."

"Never indifferent; you make a mistake there."

"Well, friends, then; and that is not much better after having been lovers."

"But friendship, dearest, is never indifferent. Love, it is true, may be in its composition. We know it, as it has been thus from the beginning of the world."

"Then the ambassador was right. Repentance might come and torment us when love had been replaced by calmer friendship."

"If you think so, let us marry to-morrow, and punish thereby the vices of our human nature."

"Yes, we will marry, but there is no hurry; fearing lest Hymen should quicken the departure of love, let us enjoy our happiness while we can."

"You speak admirably, my angel, and deserve the greatest good fortune."

"I wish for no greater than what you procure me."

We went to bed, continuing our discussion, and, when we were in each other's arms, we made an arrangement which suited us very well.

"Lausanne," said she, "is a little town where you would meet with the warmest hospitality and during your fortnight's stay you will have nothing to do but make visits and go to suppers. I am known to all the nobility, and the Duke of Rosebury, who wearied me with his love-making, is still there. My appearance with you will make everybody talk and it will be as annoying for you as for me. My mother lives there, too. She would say nothing, but in her heart she would be ill-pleased to see me as the housekeeper of a man like you, for common sense would inform everyone that I was your mistress."

I thought she was right and that it would be well to respect the rules of society. We decided that she should go to Lausanne by herself and stay with her mother, that in two or three days I should follow her and live by myself as long as I liked, having full liberty to see her at her mother's.

"When you leave Lausanne," said she, "I will rejoin you at Geneva and then we will travel together where you please and as long as our love lasts."

In two days she started early in the morning, sure of my constancy and congratulating herself on her discretion. I was sad at her leaving me, but my farewell calls served to rouse me from my grief. I wished to make M. Haller's acquaintance before I left Switzerland, and the mayor, M. de Muralt, gave me a letter of introduction to him very handsomely expressed. M. Haller was the bailiff of Roche.

When I called to take leave of Madame de la Saone, I found her in bed and was obliged to remain by her bedside for a quarter of an hour. She spoke of her disease and gave the conversation such a turn that she was able with perfect propriety to let me see that the ravages of the disease had not impaired the beauty of her body. The sight convinced me that Mignard had need of less courage than I thought, and I was within an inch of doing her the same service. It was easy enough to look only at her body and it would have been difficult to behold anything more beautiful.

I know well that prudes and hypocrites, if they ever read these *Memoirs*, will be scandalized at the poor lady, but, in showing her person so readily, she avenged herself on the malady which had disfigured her. Perhaps, too, her goodness of heart and politeness told her what a trial it was to look at her face, and she wished to indemnify the man who disguised his feelings of repugnance by showing him what gifts nature had given her. I am sure, ladies, that the most prudish—nay, the most virtuous—amongst you, if you were unfortunate enough to be so monstrously deformed in the face, would introduce some fashion which would conceal your ugliness and display those beauties which custom hides from view. And doubtless Madame de la Saone would have been more chary of her person if she had been able to enchant with her face like you.

The day I left, I dined with M. F— and was severely taken to task by pretty Sara for having sent her "little wife" away before me. (The reader will see how I met her again in London three years later.) Le

Duc was still in the doctor's hands and very weak; but I made him go with me, as I had a good deal of property and could not trust it to anybody else.

I left Berne feeling naturally very sad. I had been happy there and to this day the thought of that city is a pleasant one.

I had to consult Dr. Herrenschwand about Madame d'Urfé, so I stopped at Morat, where he lived, only four leagues from Berne. The doctor made me dine with him, that I might try the fish of the lake, which I found delicious. I had intended to go on directly after dinner, but I was delayed by a curiosity of which I shall inform the reader.

After I had given the doctor a fee of two louis for his advice in writing on a case of tapeworm, he made me walk with him by the Avanches road and we went as far as the famous mortuary of Morat.

"This mortuary," said the doctor, "was constructed with part of the bones of the Burgundians, who perished here at the well known battle lost by Charles the Bold."

The Latin inscription made me laugh.

"This inscription," said I, "contains an insulting jest; it is almost burlesque, for the gravity of an inscription should not allow of laughter."

The doctor, like a patriotic Swiss, would not allow it, but I think it was false shame on his part. The inscription ran as follows, and the impartial reader can judge of its nature:

"Deo. Opt. Max. Caroli, inclyti et fortissimi Burgundiæ ducis, exercitum Muratum obsidens, ab Helvetiis cæsus, hoc sui monumentum reliquit, anno MCDLXXVI."

Till then I had had a great idea of Morat. Its fame of seven centuries, three sieges sustained and repulsed, all had given me a sublime notion of it; I expected to see something and saw nothing.

"Then Morat has been razed to the ground?" said I to the doctor.

"Not at all; it is as it always has been, or nearly so."

I concluded that a man who wants to be well informed should read first and then correct his knowledge by travel. To know ill is worse than not to know at all, and Montaigne says that we ought to know things well.

But it was the following comic adventure which made me spend the night at Morat:

I found at the inn a young maid who spoke a sort of rustic Italian. She struck me by her great likeness to my fair stocking-seller in Paris. She was called Raton, a name which my memory has happily preserved. I offered her six francs for her favours, but she refused the money with a sort of pride, telling me that I had made a mistake and that she was a good girl.

"It may be so," said I, and I ordered my horses to be put in. When the virtuous Raton saw me on the point of leaving, she said, with an air that was at once gay and timid, that she needed two louis and, if I liked to give her them and pass the night with her, I should be well content.

"I will stay, but remember to be kind."

"I will."

When everybody had gone to bed, she came into my room with a little frightened manner, calculated to redouble my ardour, but by great good luck, having a call of nature, I took the light and ran to the place where I could satisfy it. While there I amused myself by reading the innumerable follies one finds written in such places and suddenly my eyes lighted on these words: This tenth day of August, 1760, the wretched Raton gave me the what-d'you-call-it; reader, beware.

It may be imagined that my passion cooled, and that I sent her away in a moment; but I felt at the same time the greatest gratitude to what is called "chance," for I should never have thought of examining a girl whose face was all lilies and roses and who could not have been more than eighteen.

Next day I went to Roche to see the celebrated Haller.

CHAPTER 73

M. HALLER was a man six feet tall and broad in proportion; he was a well built man, a physical as well as a mental colossus. He received me courteously and, when he had read M. de Muralt's letter, he displayed the greatest politeness, which shows that a good letter of introduction is never out of place. This learned man displayed to me all the treasures of his knowledge, replying with exactitude to all my questions and, above all, with a rare modesty which seemed to me overdone, for, whilst he explained the most difficult questions, he had the air of a scholar who sought to learn; but on the other hand, when he asked me a scientific question, it was with so delicate an art that I could not help giving the right answer.

M. Haller was a great physiologist, a great doctor and also a great anatomist. He called Morgagni his master, though he had himself made numerous discoveries relating to the frame of man. While I stayed with him, he showed me a number of letters from Morgagni and Pontedera, a professor of botany, a science of which Haller had an extensive knowledge. Hearing me speak of these learned men, whose works I had read at an early age, he complained that Pontedera's letters were almost illegible and written in extremely obscure Latin. He showed me a letter from a Berlin Academician, whose name I have forgotten, who said that, since the King had read his letter, he had no more thoughts of suppressing the Latin language. Haller had written to Frederick the Great that a monarch who succeeded in the unhappy enterprise of proscribing the language of Cicero and Virgil from the republic of letters would raise a deathless monument to his own ignorance. If men of letters require a universal language to communicate with one another, Latin is certainly the best, for Greek and Arabic do not adapt themselves in the same way to the genius of modern civilization.

Haller was a good poet of the Pindaric kind; he was also an excellent

statesman and had rendered great services to his country. His morals were irreproachable and I remember his telling me that the only way to give precepts was to do so by example. As a good citizen, he was an admirable *pater-familias*, for what greater proof could he give of his love of country than by presenting it with worthy subjects in his children, and such subjects result from a good upbringing. His wife was still young and bore on her features the marks of good nature and discretion. He had a charming daughter of about eighteen; her appearance was modest and at table she opened her mouth only to speak in a low tone to a young man who sat beside her. After dinner, finding myself alone with M. Haller, I asked him who this young man was. He told me he was his daughter's tutor.

"A tutor like that and so pretty a pupil might easily become lovers."

"Yes, please God."

This Socratic reply made me see how misplaced my remark had been, and I felt some confusion. Finding a book to my hand, I opened it to restore my composure. It was an octavo volume of his works and I read in it, "*Utrum memoria post mortem dubito.*"

"You do not think, then," said I, "that the memory is an essential part of the soul?"

"How is that question to be answered?" M. Haller replied, cautiously, as he had his reasons for wishing to be considered orthodox.

During dinner I asked if M. de Voltaire came often to see him. By way of reply he repeated these lines of the poet:

*Vetabo qui Cereris sacrum
Vulgarit arcanum sub iisdem
Sit trabibus.*

I spent three days with this celebrated man, but I thought myself obliged to refrain from asking his opinion on any religious questions, although I had a great desire to do so, as it would have pleased me to have his opinion on that delicate subject; but I believe that in matters of that kind M. Haller judged only by his heart. I told him, however, that I should consider a visit to Voltaire as a great event, and he said I was right. He added, without the slightest bitterness, "M. de Voltaire is a man who ought to be known, although, in spite of the laws of nature, many persons have found him greater at a distance than close at hand."

M. Haller kept a good and abundant, though plain, table; he drank only water. At dessert only he allowed himself a small glass of liqueur drowned in an enormous glass of water. He talked a great deal of Boerhaave, whose favourite pupil he had been. He said that, after Hippocrates, Boerhaave was the greatest doctor and the greatest chemist that had ever existed.

"How is it," said I, "that he did not attain mature age?"

"Because there is no cure for death. Boerhaave was born a doctor, as Homer was born a poet; otherwise he would have succumbed at the age of fourteen to a malignant ulcer which had resisted all the best

treatment of the day. He cured it himself by rubbing it constantly with salt dissolved in his own urine."

"I have been told that he possessed the philosopher's stone."

"Yes, but I don't believe it."

"Do you think it possible there is such a stone?"

"I have been working for the last thirty years to convince myself of its impossibility; I have not yet done so, but I am sure that no one who does not believe in the possibility of the Great Work can be a good chemist."

When I left him, he begged me to write and tell him what I thought of the great Voltaire, and in this way our French correspondence began. I possess twenty-two letters from this justly celebrated man, and the last was written six months before his too early death. The longer I live, the more interest I take in my papers. They are the treasure which attaches me to life and makes death more hateful still.

I had been reading at Berne Rousseau's *Héloïse*, and I asked M. Haller's opinion of it. He told me that he had once read part of it to oblige a friend and from this part he could judge of the whole. "It is the worst of all novels because it is the most eloquently expressed. You will see the country of Vaud, but don't expect to see the originals of the brilliant portraits which Jean-Jacques painted. He seems to have thought that lying was allowable in a novel, but he has abused the privilege. Petrarch was a learned man and told no lies in speaking of his love for Laura, whom he loved as every man loves the woman whose slave he is; and, if Laura had not contented her illustrious lover, he would not have celebrated her."

Thus Haller spoke to me of Petrarch, mentioning Rousseau with aversion. He disliked his very eloquence, as he said it owed all its merits to antithesis and paradox. Haller was a learned man of the first class, but his knowledge was not employed for the purpose of ostentation, nor in private life, nor when he was in the company of people who did not care for science. No one knew better than he how to accommodate himself to his company—he was friendly with everyone and never gave offence. But what were his qualifications? It would be much easier to say what he had not than what he had. He had no pride, self-sufficiency, nor tone of superiority—in fact, none of those defects which are often the reproach of the learned and the witty.

He was a man of austere virtue, but he took care to hide the austerity under a veil of a real and universal kindness. Undoubtedly he thought little of the ignorant, who talk about everything right or wrong, instead of remaining silent, and have at bottom only contempt for the learned; but he showed his scorn only by saying nothing. He knew that a despised ignoramus becomes an enemy, and Haller wished to be loved. He neither boasted of, nor concealed, his knowledge, but let it run like a limpid stream flowing through the meadows. He talked well but never absorbed the conversation. He never spoke of his works; when someone mentioned them, he would turn the conversation as soon as he con-

veniently could. He was sorry to be obliged to contradict anyone who conversed with him.

When I reached Lausanne, I found myself enabled to retain my incognito for a day at any rate. I naturally gave the first place to my affections. I went straight to my sweetheart without needing to ask my way, so well had she indicated the streets through which I had to pass. I found her with her mother, but I was not a little astonished to see Lebel there also. However, my surprise must have passed unnoticed, for my housekeeper, rising from her seat with a cry of joy, threw her arms about my neck and, after having kissed me affectionately, presented me to her worthy mother, who welcomed me in the friendliest manner. I asked Lebel after the ambassador and how long he had been at Lausanne.

He replied, with a polite and respectful air, that his master was quite well and that he had come to Lausanne on business and had been there only a few hours, and that, wishing to pay his regards to Madame Dubois's mother, he had been pleasantly surprised to see the daughter there as well.

"You know," he added, "what my intentions are. I have to go back to-morrow; when you have made up your minds, write to me and I will come and take her to Soleure, where I will marry her."

He could not have spoken more plainly or honourably. I said that I would never oppose my sweetheart's wishes, and my Dubois, interrupting me, said in her turn that she would never leave me until I sent her away.

Lebel found these replies too vague and told me with noble freedom that we must give him a definite reply, since in such cases uncertainty spoils all. At that moment I felt as if I could never agree to his wishes and I told him that in ten days I would let him know of our resolution, whatever it was. At that he was satisfied and left us.

After his departure my sweetheart's mother, whose good sense stood her instead of wit, talked to us in a manner that answered our inclinations, for, amorous as we were, we could not bear the idea of parting. Meanwhile I agreed that my housekeeper should wait up for me every evening till midnight and that we could talk over our reply after a good night's rest.

My Dubois had a separate room with a good bed and excellent furniture. She gave me a very good supper and we spent a delicious night. In the morning we felt more in love than ever and were not at all disposed to comply with Lebel's wishes. Nevertheless, we had a serious conversation.

The reader will remember that my mistress had promised to pardon my infidelities, provided I confessed them. I had none to confess, but in the course of conversation I told her about Raton.

"We ought to think ourselves very fortunate," said she, "for, if it had not been for chance, we should have been in a fine state now."

"Yes, and I should be in despair."

"I don't doubt it, and you would be all the more wretched as I should never complain to you."

"I see only one way of providing against such a misfortune. When I have been unfaithful to you, I will punish myself by depriving myself of the pleasure of giving you proofs of my affection till I am certain that I can do so without danger."

"Ah! you would punish me for your faults, would you? If you love me as I love you, believe me you would find a better remedy than that."

"What is that?"

"You would never be unfaithful to me."

"You are right. I am sorry I was not the first to think of this plan, which I promise to follow in future."

"Don't make any promises," said she, with a sigh. "It might prove too difficult to keep them."

It is only love which can inspire such conversations, but unfortunately it gains nothing by them.

Next morning, just as I was going out to take my letters, the Baron de Bercei, uncle of my friend Bavois, entered.

"I know," said he, "that my nephew owes his fortune to you; he is just going to be made general, and I and all the family will be enchanted to make your acquaintance. I have come to offer my services and to beg that you will dine with me to-day and on any other day you please when you have nothing better to do, and I hope you will always consider yourself of the family."

"At the same time I beg of you not to tell anybody that my nephew has become a Catholic, as, according to the prejudices of the country, it would be a dishonour which would reflect on the whole family."

I accepted his invitation and promised to say nothing about the circumstance he had mentioned.

I left my letters of introduction and received everywhere a welcome of the most distinguished kind. Madame de Gentil-Langalerie appeared the most amiable of all the ladies I called on, but I had not time to pay my court to one more than another. Every day politeness called me to some dinner, supper, ball or assembly. I was bored beyond measure and felt inclined to say how troublesome it is to have such a welcome. I spent a fortnight in the little town, where everyone prides himself on his liberty, and in all my life I have never experienced such a slavery, for I had not a moment to myself. I was able to pass only one night with my sweetheart and I longed to set off with her for Geneva. Everybody desired to give me letters of introduction for M. de Voltaire, and by their eagerness one would have thought the great man beloved, whereas all detested him on account of his sarcastic humour.

"What, ladies!" said I, "is not M. de Voltaire good-natured, polite and affable to you who have been kind enough to act in his plays with him?"

"Not in the least. When he hears us rehearse, he grumbles all the time. We never say a thing to please him: here it is a bad pronunciation, there a tone not sufficiently passionate, sometimes one speaks too

softly, sometimes too loud; and it's worse when we are acting. What a hubbub there is if one add a syllable or if some carelessness spoil one of his verses. He frightens us. So-and-so laughed badly; So-and-so in Alzire only pretended to weep."

"Does he want you to weep really?"

"Certainly. He will have real tears. He says that, if an actor wants to draw tears, he must shed them himself."

"I think he is right there; but he should not be so severe with amateurs, above all with charming actresses like you; such perfection is to be looked for only from professionals. But all authors are the same; they never think that the actor has pronounced the words with the force which the sense, as they see it, requires."

"I told him one day that it was not my fault if his lines had not the proper force."

"I am sure he laughed."

"Laughed? No, sneered, for he is a rude and impertinent man."

"But I suppose you overlook all these failings?"

"Not at all; we have sent him about his business."

"Sent him about his business?"

"Yes. He left the house he had rented here at short notice and retired to where you will find him now. He never comes to see us now, even if we ask him."

"Oh, you do ask him, though you sent him about his business?"

"We cannot deprive ourselves of the pleasure of admiring his talents and, if we teased him, that was only from revenge and to teach him something of the manners of good society."

"You have given a great master a lesson."

"Yes; but, when you see him, mention Lausanne and see what he will say of us. But he will say it laughingly; that's his way."

During my stay I often saw Lord Rosebury, who had vainly courted my charming Dubois. I have never known a young man more disposed to silence. I have been told that he had wit, that he was well educated and even in high spirits at times, but he could not get over his shyness, which gave him an almost indefinable air of stupidity. At balls, assemblies—in fact, everywhere, his manners consisted of innumerable bows. When one spoke to him, he replied in good French but with the fewest possible words, and his shy manner showed that every question was a trouble to him. One day, when I was dining with him, I asked him some question about his country which required five or six small phrases by way of answer. He gave me an excellent reply, but blushed all the time like a young girl when she comes out. The celebrated Fox, who was then twenty and was at the same dinner, succeeded in making him laugh, but it was by saying something in English which I did not understand in the least. Eight months after I saw him again at Turin; he was then amorous of a banker's wife, who was able to untie his tongue.

At Lausanne I saw a young girl of eleven or twelve by whose beauty I was exceedingly struck. She was the daughter of Madame de Saconai,

whom I had known at Berne. I do not know her after-history, but the impression she made on me has never been effaced. Nothing in nature has ever exercised such a powerful influence over me as a pretty face, even if it be a child's.

The Beautiful, as I have been told, is endowed with this power of attraction; and I would fain believe it, since that which attracts me is necessarily beautiful in my eyes. But is it so in reality? I doubt it, as that which has influenced me has not influenced others. The universal or perfect beauty does not exist or it does not possess this power. All who have discussed the subject have hesitated to pronounce upon it, which they would not have done if they had kept to the idea of *form*. According to my ideas, beauty is only form, for that which is not beautiful is that which has no form, and the deformed or formless is the opposite of the *pulchrum* and *formosum*.

We are right to seek for the definitions of things, but, when we have them to hand in the words, why should we go farther? If the word *forma* is Latin, we should seek for the Latin meaning and not the French, which, however, often uses *déformé* or *difforme* instead of *laid*, "ugly," without people's noticing that its opposite should be a word which implies the existence of form; and this can only be "beauty." We should note that *informe* in French as well as in Latin means "shapeless," a body without any definite appearance.

We will conclude, then, that it is the beauty of woman which has always exercised an irresistible sway over me, and more especially that beauty which resides in the face. It is there the power lies, and so true is this that the sphinxes of Rome and Versailles almost make me fall in love with them, though, the face excepted, they are deformed in every sense of the word. In looking at the fine proportions of their faces, one forgets their deformed bodies. What, then, is beauty? We know not; and, when we attempt to define it or to enumerate its qualities, we become like Socrates, we hesitate. The only thing our minds can seize is the effect produced by it, and that which charms, ravishes and makes me in love I call "beauty." It is something that can be seen with the eyes and for my eyes I speak. If they had a voice, they would speak better than I, but probably in the same sense.

No painter has surpassed Raphael in the beauty of the figures which his divine pencil produced; but, if this great painter had been asked what beauty was, he would probably have replied that he could not say, that he knew it by heart and thought he had reproduced it whenever he had seen it, but that he did not know in what it consisted.

"That face pleases me," he would say. "It is therefore beautiful."

He ought to have thanked God for having given him such an exquisite eye for the beautiful; but *omne pulchrum difficile*.

The painters of high renown, all those whose works proclaim genius, have excelled in the delineation of the beautiful; but how small is their number compared to the vast crowd who have strained every nerve to depict beauty and have left us only mediocrity!

If a painter could be dispensed from making his works beautiful,

every man might be an artist; for nothing is easier than to fashion ugliness, and brush and canvas would be as easy to handle as mortar and trowel.

Although portrait painting is the most important branch of the art, it is to be noted that those who have succeeded in this line are very few. There are three kinds of portraits: ugly likenesses, perfect likenesses and those which to a perfect likeness add an almost imperceptible character of beauty. The first class is worthy only of contempt and their authors of stoning, for to lack of taste and talent they add impertinence and yet never seem to see their failings. The second class cannot be denied to possess real merit; but the palm belongs to the third, which unfortunately are seldom found and whose authors deserve the large fortunes they amass. Such was the famous Notier, whom I knew in Paris in the year 1750. This great artist was then eighty and, in spite of his great age, his talents seemed in all their freshness. He painted a plain woman; it was a speaking likeness and, in spite of that, those who saw only the portrait pronounced her to be a handsome woman. Nevertheless, the most minute examination would not have revealed any faithlessness to the original, but some imperceptible touches gave a real but indefinite air of beauty to the whole. Whence does that magic art take its source? One day, when he had been painting the plain-looking Mesdames de France, who on the canvas looked like two Aspasias, I asked him the above question. He answered:

"It is a magic which the god of taste distils from my brains through my brushes. It is the divinity of Beauty whom all the world adores and no one can define, since no one knows of what it consists. That canvas shows you what a delicate shade there is between beauty and ugliness, and nevertheless this shade seems an enormous difference to those unacquainted with art."

The Greek painters made Venus, the goddess of beauty, squint-eyed and this odd idea has been praised by some, but these painters were certainly in the wrong. Two squinting eyes might be beautiful, but certainly not so beautiful as if they did not squint, for whatever beauty they had could not proceed from their deformity.

After this long digression, with which the reader may not be very well pleased, it is time for me to return to my sweetheart. The tenth day of my visit to Lausanne I went to sup and sleep with my mistress and that night was the happiest I remember. In the morning, while we were taking coffee with her mother, I observed that we seemed in no hurry to part. At this, the mother, a woman of few words, took up the discourse in a polite and dignified manner and told me it was my duty to undeceive Lebel before I left; and at the same time she gave me a letter she had had from him the evening before. The worthy man begged her to remind me that, if I could not make up my mind to separate from her daughter before I left Lausanne, it would be much more difficult for me to do so when I was farther off—above all, if, as would probably be the case, she gave me

a living pledge of her love. He said that he had no thoughts of drawing back from his word, but he should wish to be able to say that he had received his wife from her mother's hands.

When I had read the letter aloud, the worthy mother wept and left us alone. A moment's silence ensued and, with a sigh that showed what it cost her, my dear Dubois had the courage to tell me that I must instantly write to Lebel to give up all pretensions to her or to come and take her at once.

"If I write and tell him to think no more of you, I must marry you myself."

"No."

With this "no" she arose and left me. I thought it over for a quarter of an hour, I weighed the *pros* and *cons* and still my love shrank from the sacrifice. At last, considering that my housekeeper would never have such a chance again and that I was not sure I could always make her happy, I resolved to be generous and determined to write to Lebel that Madame Dubois had decided of her own free will to become his wife, that I had no right to oppose her resolution and would go so far as to congratulate him on a happiness I envied him. I begged him to leave Soleure at once and come and receive her in my presence from the hands of her worthy mother.

I signed the letter and took it to my housekeeper, who was in her mother's room. "Take this letter, dearest, and read it and, if you approve its contents, put your signature beside mine." She read it several times, while her good mother wept, and then, with an affectionate and sorrowful air, she took the pen and signed. I begged her mother to find somebody to take the letter to Soleure immediately, before my resolution was weakened by repentance.

The messenger came and, as soon as he had gone, "Farewell," said I, embracing her, with my eyes wet with tears, "farewell; we shall see each other again as soon as Lebel comes."

I went to my inn, a prey to the deepest grief. This sacrifice had given a new impetus to my love for this charming woman and I felt a sort of spasm, which made me afraid I should get ill. I shut myself up in my room and ordered the servants to say I was unwell and could see no one.

In the evening of the fourth day after Lebel was announced. He embraced me, saying his happiness would be due to me. He then left me, telling me he would expect me at the house of his future bride.

"Excuse me to-day, my dear fellow," said I, "but I will dine with you there to-morrow."

When he had left me, I told Le Duc to make all preparations for our leaving the next day after dinner.

I went out early on the following day to take leave of everybody, and at noon Lebel came to take me to that sad repast, at which, however, I was not so sad as I had feared.

As I was leaving, I begged the future Madame Lebel to return me

the ring I had given her and, as we had agreed, I presented her with a roll of a hundred louis, which she took with a melancholy air.

"I would never have sold it," said she, "for I have no need of money."

"In that case I will give it back to you, but promise me never to part with it, and keep the hundred louis as some small reward of the services you have rendered me."

She shook my hand affectionately, put on my finger her wedding ring and left me to hide her grief. I wiped my tears away and said to Lebel:

"You are about to possess yourself of a treasure which I cannot commend too highly. You are a man of honour; you will appreciate her excellent qualities, and you will know how to make her happy. She will love you only, take care of your household and keep no secrets from you. She is full of wit and spirits and will easily disperse the slightest shadow of ill humour which may fall on you."

I went in with him to the mother's room to take leave of her; and Madame Dubois begged me to delay my departure and sup once more with her. I told her that my horses were put in and the carriage waiting at the door and that such a delay would set tongues talking; but that, if she liked, she, her future husband and her mother, could come and see me at an inn two leagues away on the Geneva road, where we could stay as long as we liked. Lebel approved of the plan and my proposition was accepted.

When I got back to my inn, I found my carriage ready and I got in and drove to the meeting-place and ordered a good supper for four, and an hour later my guests arrived.

The gay and even happy air of the newly betrothed surprised me, but what astonished me more was the easy way she threw herself into my arms as soon as she saw me. It put me quite out of countenance, but she had more wit than I. However, I mustered up sufficient strength to follow her cue, but could not help thinking that, if she had really loved me, she would not have found it possible to pass thus from love to mere friendship. However, I imitated her and made no objections to those marks of affection allowed to friendship, which are supposed to have no tincture of love in them.

At supper I thought I saw that Lebel was more delighted at having such a wife than at the prospect of enjoying her and satisfying a strong passion. That calmed me; I could not be jealous of a man like that. I perceived, too, that my sweetheart's high spirits were more feigned than real; she wished to make me share them so as to render our separation less bitter and to tranquillise her future husband as to the nature of our feelings for one another. And, when reason and time had quieted the tempest in my heart, I could not help thinking it very natural that she should be pleased at the prospect of being independent and enjoying a fortune.

We made an excellent supper, which we washed down so well that at last the gaiety which had been simulated ended by being real. I

looked at the charming Dubois with pleasure; I regarded her as a treasure which had belonged to me and which, after making me happy, was with my full consent about to ensure the happiness of another. It seemed to me that I had been magnanimous enough to give her the reward she deserved, like a good Mussulman who gives a favourite slave his freedom in recompense of his fidelity. Her sallies made me laugh and recalled the happy moments I had passed with her, but the idea of her happiness prevented my regretting having yielded my rights to another.

As Lebel was obliged to return to Lausanne in order to get back to Soleure in two days, we had to part. I embraced him and asked him to continue his friendship towards me, and he promised with great effusion to be my friend till death. As we were going down the stair, my charming friend said, with great candour:

"I am not really gay, but I oblige myself to appear so. I shall not be happy till the scar on my heart has healed. Lebel can claim only my esteem, but I shall be his alone, though my love be all for you. When we see each other again, as from what you say I hope we shall, we shall be able to meet as true friends and perhaps we shall congratulate each other on the wise decision we have made. As for you, though I do not think you will forget me, I am sure that before long some more or less worthy object will replace me and banish your sorrow. I hope it will be so. Be happy. I may be with child; if it prove to be so, you shall have no cause to complain of my care of your child, which you shall take away when you please. We made an agreement on this point yesterday. We arranged that the marriage shall not be consummated for two months; thus we shall be certain whether the child belongs to you or no, and we will let people think that it is the legitimate offspring of our marriage. Lebel conceived this plan that he might have his mind at rest on the supposed power of inheritance, in which he declares he believes no more than I do. He has promised to love the child as if he were its father. If you write to me, I will keep you acquainted with everything; and, if I have the happiness to give you a child, it will be much dearer to me than your ring. But Lebel is smiling at our tears."

I could reply only by pressing her to my breast, and then I gave her over to her future husband, who told me, as he got into the carriage, that our long talk had pleased him very much.

I went to bed sadly enough. Next morning, when I awoke, a pastor of the Church of Geneva came to ask me to give him a place in my carriage. I agreed and was not sorry I had done so.

This priest was an eloquent man, although a theologian, and answered the most difficult religious questions I could put to him. There was no mystery with him; everything was reason. I have never found a more compliant Christianity than that of this worthy man, whose morals, as I heard afterwards in Geneva, were perfectly pure. But I found out that this kind of Christianity was not peculiar to him, all his fellow Calvinists thought in the same way.

When I endeavoured to convince him that he was a Calvinist in name only, since he did not believe that Jesus Christ was of the same substance as the Father, he replied that Calvin was infallible only when he spoke *ex cathedra*, but I struck him dumb by quoting the words of the *Gospel*. He blushed when I reproached him with Calvin's belief that the Pope was the Antichrist of the *Apocalypse*.

"It will be impossible to destroy this prejudice in Geneva," said he, "till the government orders the effacement of an inscription on the church door which everybody reads and which speaks of the head of the Roman Church in this manner."

"The people," he added, "are wholly ignorant; but I have a niece of twenty, who does not belong to the people in this way. I shall have the honour of making you acquainted with her; she is a theologian, and pretty as well."

"I shall be delighted to see her, but God preserve me from arguing with her!"

"She will make you argue and I can assure you that it will be a pleasure for you."

"We shall see; but will you give me your address?"

"No, sir, but I shall have the honour of conducting you to your inn and acting as your guide."

I got down at The Scales and was well lodged. It was the twentieth of August, 1760. On going to the window, I noticed a pane of glass on which I read these words, written with the point of a diamond: "You will forget Henriette." In a moment, my thoughts flew back to the time in which Henriette had written these words, thirteen years before, and my hair stood on end. We had been lodged in this room when she separated from me to return to France. I was overwhelmed and fell into an armchair and abandoned myself to deep thought. Noble Henriette, dear Henriette, whom I had loved so well, where was she now? I had never heard of her; I had never asked anyone about her. Comparing my present and past estates, I was obliged to confess that I was less worthy of possessing her now than then. I could still love, but I was no longer so delicate in my thoughts; I had not those feelings which excuse the faults committed by the senses, nor that probity which serves as a contrast to the follies and frailties of man; but, what was worst of all, I was not so strong. Nevertheless, it seemed that the remembrance of Henriette restored me to my pristine vigour. I had no longer my housekeeper, which left me a great void, I felt such enthusiasm that, if I had known where Henriette was, I should have gone to seek her out, despite her prohibition.

The next day, at an early hour, I went to the banker Tronchin, who had all my money. After seeing my account, he gave me a letter of credit on Marseilles, Genoa, Florence and Rome and I took only twelve thousand francs in cash. I had only fifty thousand crowns, three hundred francs, but that would take me a good way. As soon as I had delivered my letters, I returned to The Scales, impatient to see M. de Voltaire.

I found my fellow traveller in my room. He asked me to dinner, telling me that I should have for company M. Villars-Chandieu, who would take me after dinner to see M. de Voltaire, who had been expecting me for several days. I followed the worthy man and found at his house an excellent company and the young theologian, whom her uncle did not address till dessert. I will endeavour to report as faithfully as possible the young woman's conversation.

"What have you been doing this morning, my dear niece?"

"I have been reading St. Augustine, whom I thought absurd, and I think I have refuted him in short order."

"On what point?"

"Concerning the mother of the Saviour."

"What does St. Augustine say?"

"You have no doubt remarked the passage, uncle. He says that the Virgin Mary conceived Jesus Christ through her ears."

"You do not believe that?"

"Certainly not, and for three good reasons. In the first place because God, being immaterial, has no need of a hole to go in or come out by; in the second place, because the ear has no connection with the womb; in the third place, because Mary, if she conceived by the ear, would have given birth by the same channel. This would do well enough for the Catholics," said she, giving me a glance, "as they then would be reasonable in calling her a virgin before her conception, during her pregnancy and after she had given birth to the child."

I was extremely astonished and my astonishment was shared by the other guests. Divine theology rises above all fleshly considerations and, after what we had heard, we had either to allow her this privilege or to consider the young theologian as a woman without shame. The learned niece did not seem to care what we thought, for she asked me my opinion on the matter.

"If I were a theologian and allowed myself an exact examination into the miracles, it is possible I should be of your opinion; but, as this is by no means the case, I must limit myself to condemning St. Augustine for having analysed the mystery of the Annunciation. I may say, however, that, if the Virgin had been deaf, St. Augustine would have been guilty of a manifest absurdity, since the Incarnation would have been an impossibility, as in that case the nerves of the ear would have had no sort of communication with the womb and the process would have been inconceivable; but the Incarnation is a miracle."

She replied with great politeness that I had shown myself a greater theologian than she, and her uncle thanked me for having given her a lesson. He made her discuss various subjects, but she did not shine. Her only subject was the New Testament. I shall have occasion to speak of this young woman when I get back to Geneva.

After dinner we went to see Voltaire, who was just leaving the table as we came in. He was in the middle of a court of gentlemen and ladies, which made my introduction a solemn one; but with this great man solemnity could not fail to be in my favour.

END OF VOLUME ONE